



EXTRA

THE AUTOMOBILE

Four Star Extra, Volume 1 Number 1, is brought to you by that hedonistic-to-the hilt quartet, Joyce & Arnie Katz (59 Livingston St., Apt. 6B, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201) and Bill & Charlene Kunkel (85-30 121 St., Kew Gardens, N.Y. 11415). Published irregularly, it is sent to the 75 people on our mailing list with our compliments. Reviewers please note: Four Star Extra is not available for money. All funds received will be allocated to the lavish brand of living which has, quite rightly, become our trademark. Publication date for this Gala First Issue is May 7, 1978.

FOURPLAY

Arnie: I have to admit that I may not be the best choice to lead off this first joint editorial. After all, this issue's theme is "The Automobile," and as you'll read later on, I can't even drive. On the other hand, I'm the largest and strongest person here, and I'll be damned if the rest of them are going to pry me loose from this typewriter until I've had my say on this historic occasion.

Speaking of historic occasions, I'll bet many of you are shaking your heads, wondering why four supposedly sensible, retired fans would suddenly burst forth with a new fan-mag. I blame it all on television. TV has been so bad lately that we've suddenly found ourselves with several free hours formerly spent in unholy communion with the tube. Now I, personally, voted for devoting these hours to licentious debauchery, but somehow we're doing this instead. Old habits die hard.

Still, it's better than watching "The Jeffersons," eh Bill?

Bill: Very true, but then so is an afternoon spent free-form target drooling. How bad has television been lately, you ask? I'll tell you: It's so bad that I've been watching Spanish-language movies (without benefit of subtitles) on the Ultra High Frequency channel 47.

Actually, they've been sorta interesting. The other night they showed a tasty little number on "Cine Sinestro" (the Espanish Espeaking version of Chiller Theater) which translated into something like "Night of the Witchdoctors." It involved a party of four -- three beautiful women and their pimp-like master -- on an ill-fated safari to some spot where virgins were once sacrificed to the unspeakable lusts of a group of ridiculous-looking witchdoctors. Each time a female came near The Spot, something they did at well-spaced intervals -- zap! The witch croakers returned, bringing with them their latest female victim, a vampire dressed in a leopard-skin bikini. Whereupon they grabbed the victim, tied her up, danced the Sacred Funky Ungawa and did their inimitable thing with her.

It was a very good film, considering that I don't speak Spanish. This has little to do with cars, I realize, but the safari members did come in a jeep.

Fourplay -- II

Arnie: I just returned to the room and expressed wonderment that neither Joyce nor Charlene had written anything. Now that I've read Bill's comments, I think I understand.

Wait a minute. Since you readers don't know how we're doing this editorial, my comment is probably lost on you. Very well, then, I'll tell you all about it. Each of us is sitting in front of his or her own electric typewriter. We all have carbon ribbon machines, too -- nothing but the best for Four Star Extra. When an editor has something to contribute, he or she types it right up on plain paper. It is then read to the other three and, if acceptable, assigned a number. The various comments are then collated in numerical order and stenciled. This method produces the type of comedic repartee you watch on prime time television's top shows -- like "The Jeffersons," for instance.

If you believe this explanation, you have been a fan too long.

Charlene: Well, that can't apply to me, since I'm as gaffiated as they get and likely to remain so.

But let me get back to the theme of this issue, "The Automobile." I'm the old pro of the bunch here when it comes to driving, since I've had my license all of five years now. Our car, Handsome Jimmy Valiant, and I have had many a fine time together.

He was just a few days old when we made our first trip together, to the DisCon. He's taken us to other conventions, too; for instance, the World Wrestling Convention at the Madison Motor Inn, Boston, Mass. Ah, the Madison Motor Inn! There you could park your car a convenient couple of blocks away (taking care not to park on the actual railroad tracks, mind you), sleep on either the "Alaska" or "Africa" side of the bed in the unique half-air-conditioned rooms, bask in the warmth of the totally un-air conditioned hallways and learn the most fascinating things about the previous occupants of your room.

That reminds me, Joyce, what did you folks do with those false teeth?

Joyce: Seeing a cherry smile is not necessarily desireable when the grin is, cheshire-like, disassociated from its owner and probably remains so to this day. However, the Madison Motor Inn was not without other traces of classy decor. The creativity which led someone to paint the inside of the commode black is certainly worth mentioning.

But the joys of Boston Garden were even more compelling than the hotel itself. It was in that arena where we first observed the phenomenon of a wrestling ring completely surrounded by plexiglass walls to protect the fighters from thrown debris. Bostonians get downright cantankerous when faced with the eternal war between good and evil. Tidy, however, they are not.

It has been a kind of disappointment to Charl and me that Arnie and I never obtained a Luscious Johnny Valiant, so that we could've double-teamed the other cars on the road. Tag Team Champions of the highways -- what a career we could have had!

Bill: I find that automobile drivers -- as distinct from us stalwarts designated "passengers" -- often have an inflated opinion of their own value, just because they can step on one pedal with one foot and the other pedal with the other, turn a steering wheel and plow into the rear ends of cars manned by other, typically incompetent drivers. Haven't you noticed that whenever an accident occurs on the roadway,

(Continued after the last page of Katzenjammer)

BLUE JAUNT

WHEEL & WOE

The first time I tried to learn to drive was when I was fifteen. My mother took me out to the Poplar Bluff High School Gymnasium, which was fronted by a circle driveway and large parking lot, and started me driving in tight little curves in our 1955 Packard. However, the lessons didn't go too far. It was a bad year for my mother and her nerves weren't ready for my near-misses with telephone poles and the like, so my career as a race car driver had to be set aside. Later, first one boyfriend and then another let me sit behind the wheel of his father's car and guide the machine down the street for a few blocks, but it never came to much. It never really seemed to matter that I didn't drive since there was always someone to take me wherever I wanted to go, and I didn't particularly argue when some people began to say I was incapable of learning.

With the marvelous transportation system that New York City has, my need for driving here is even less than my need to drive in Missouri had been. But a small coal of desire was fanned, first by Charlene's learning, and later by realization that we would once again face a trip to Poplar Bluff (which has no airport) by bus from St. Louis; and then be immobilized in Poplar Bluff (which has virtually no public transportation).

Therefore early in March 1977, and not without some trepidations, I called up the Auto Club of America, took an afternoon off work to get my learner's permit, and arranged for an instructor to pick me up on Saturday morning.

Dealing with any kind of governmental bureaucracy is unpleasant, and the trip to the Department of Motor Vehicles to take the test for the learners permit was no exception. I had been given a 3:00 appointment; when I reached the Department at 2:30, I found that my appointment was merely a joke. Hundreds of applicants stood on line; it took only moments to determine that they were taken in order of appearance.

Groups of twenty or thirty applicants were run through the mill at a time. First we stood on line for an eye test; then we stood on line to pay the fee for the permit; then another wait to take the test, and another wait for the results. The test was a snap. I had read through the instruction book a couple of times and passed with no trouble. I was, however, surprised to discover that a significant number of my fellow applicants were there for second and even third tries. Part of the afternoon's ordeal was shared by a Spanish-speaking gentleman who told me in halting English that it was his third attempt. I was sorry for him when he got the results and learned he had to do it yet one more time -- but somewhat

JOYCE KATZ

BLUE JAUNT II

unnerved at the thought of someone failing this simple test (which is given in the language chosen by the applicant) repeatedly.

The appointed day and hour arrived and so did the instructor, a mid-twenties long-haired Israeli named Jack Spitzer. As Arnie, the doorman, and the building super's wife cheered from the sidewalk, I got into the car with Jack. He smiled, waved cheerfully at the spectators, and we pulled away from the curb. Then, when he turned the corner out of sight of the building, he parked the car and had me get behind the wheel. He explained that he never liked to start a new student in front of the student's house because of the family and friends who were invariably watching.

I would like to say that I was an instant success, a born driver who just naturally did the right thing. However this would be a lie, and it was only by dint of Jack's watchfulness that we didn't get killed that first day out. It was then that I formulated what was to be my wail throughout the summer: Why on why didn't I learn in Missouri, and why was I stupid enough to wait until I had to learn in New York City's Saturday morning traffic!

The lessons became a weekly routine. I did show a small amount of progress, but Jack kept telling me that it was going to be a real ordeal, and that my blissful ideal of taking a lesson a week for a couple of months was pretty far out of line. Seems that the School considered it well nigh to impossible to learn at the rate of a 45-minute lesson per week with no practice in between. The most accepted way to learn to drive was to take four or five lessons per day for a week or two, and then be a finished driver. At seventeen dollars per forty-five minute session, I compromised on what they said was minimal, a double lesson per week, and pushed back our vacation plans to the Fall.

I was not a good student and, worse yet, I was a cranky one, as Jack soon learned. One week I did something and he yelled--well, not really yelled, but raised his voice--and that magic button in my brain went off with its conditioned response. I raged, screamed and tantrumed, telling him that he could take me home, and I'd find another instructor if he wished, but that under no circumstances would I tolerate him yelling at me ever again. Somewhat shaken (I'm certain no student had ever given him such a strong reaction) he sat almost meekly while I steered us back home. Cooled somewhat, I apologized for my outbreak, and we agreed to meet again the next week.

That was really the turning point for me. I spent the week worrying if it were really true that I was incapable of learning, but Jack spent time more profitably thinking of how to make his worst student relax and be less uptight in the car. The next weekend Jack decided to let the U-turns and the parking and the difficult maneuvers wait. Instead, he had me just drive. That was the first time I ever enjoyed the lessons, and from that day on I felt more confident that sooner or later I would succeed.

Early on, Jack and I had reached enough of an understanding of one another to know we weren't going to do any special studies in his favorite motel. Having passed that point we became pretty good friends, comparing notes on goals and ambitions. Jack and his wife were growing disenchanted

BLUE JAUNT III

with New York and looking westward. For a few weeks they talked of British Columbia, then a friend of theirs returned describing the Northwest as less than idyllic. It wasn't long after that they decided on Columbus, Ohio, or perhaps it was Cleveland, where he was going to start a driving school, or perhaps a bagel bakery. As they made their plans, I tried to dovetail mine so that Jack would be able to see me through the final stages. We asked for an appointment for my first stab at the driver's test in July, since Jack was leaving at the end of that month.

Things often go awry and such was the case in this instance. The Motor Vehicle Department gave me an appointment for Thursday, July 28, and Jack was scheduled to move the previous Saturday. So in mid-July we bade farewell, and he arranged for another instructor to take me out for my final lessons and through the test.

It was a considerable disappointment, not only because I had developed a rapport with Jack during the months he tutored me, but also because I was now hung not only with a new instructor but also a different car than the one I had grown so used to. But, what're you going to do...that was how it had to be.

My next lesson was given to me by a young redhead from Queens named Judy. I suppose it was some reflection of those teen-aged trials with my mother, but there was something about the girl that set me on edge. Any word of correction from her would throw me into a panic; I could no more control the reaction than I could bring myself to admit the fact--and with only days to go before the test, I certainly couldn't change to still another instructor and yet another car. I steeled myself, determined not to let nerves bother me.

Naturally, I failed the test.

Later I learned that only two out of every fifteen pass the test in NYC on the first try, but that didn't help my broken heart any at all. I had never failed a test of any kind before (--well, there was ninth grade science, but Billy Wayne Mayberry graded my paper and added a few points and no one ever knew--) and I felt my world had ended with me in disgrace.

Arnie dried my tears, gave me a lot of comfort, then laughed at me and pushed me back on the horse. I called the Auto Club and made another date, but told them to send me a new instructor.

The next one was named Tony. We hadn't even passed the first stoplight before he was talking about "too many n[redacted] in the City". I kept both hands on the steering wheel, rolled my eyes to the heavens, and thought swiftly about changing instructors yet again, then realized I just didn't want the bother. I told him that was no way for an intelligent fellow like him to talk, and that we must simply agree not to discuss the subject. Tony didn't completely adhere to this rule in the weeks to come, but made some effort which I suppose is as much as I could expect.

For a red-necked chauvinistic lecherous double-standardized ignoramus, he was an o.k. guy, I suppose. Weekly he'd pick me up for our lesson and spend a good deal of the time trying to seduce me. The rest of the time he

BLUE JAUNT IV

would spend talking about his wife and two children, with indications that he would leave them outright if his wife ever looked at another man. Toward the last few weeks, though, Tony got onto a new track, and instead of discussing his family in between his increasingly persistent passes, he would talk about religion. He was hot into reincarnation and seemed to take it quite personally that I didn't believe. I found his religious lectures less revolting than his double standard, and let him have free hand with his attempts to convert me.

My second test was on Thursday September 15. Tony picked me up and I suppose because he realized it would likely be the last time we met, redoubled his efforts to bed me, somewhat unrealistically since he mentioned he had scheduled sixteen students for that day. I finally got him off my case by promising that soon as I received notice I had passed, I'd call him for some advanced (highway) driving lessons--which wouldn't have been a bad idea if I could have tolerated another hour in his presence.

When I got into the car with the inspector, I knew it was going to be o.k. A funny little Irish fellow, he appreciated my (deliberately) modest house-wifey dress. He appreciated my subtle perfume. He appreciated my pleasant voice; he appreciated my demure behavior. I have never been so appreciated in my life, and when I told him I appreciated his pleasantries and attempts to put me at ease, he appreciated that too.

My advice to anyone taking the test is less concerning how you handle the car, as how you dress, do your hair and perfume your body. I really believe that a low-cut neckline and high-cut hemline, frizzwig and splash of Atom Bomb #9 would have ruined my chances, no matter how well I drove.

After the test, Tony took me to the nearest subway so I could return to my office. The last time I saw him he was leaning out the window of his car, trying to pick up a black girl waiting at a bus stop. I'm really tickled to report that she cut him dead.

A week later was Yom Kippur. Arnie and I had decided that we felt it would be unbecoming to use a religious holiday for a shopping day, so determined we'd stay quietly at home. Then the mail came--and there was my notice I had passed.

I did an awfully lot of laughing and jumping up and down and squealing with delight. Then, scruples forgotten, Arnie took me to Macy's where he bought me a beautiful blue and white ceramic box, as a memento of the occasion.

And that's how I got my license.

-- Joyce Katz

PLOY

DAYTRIPPER

In spring a young man's fancy turns to thoughts of love - or so we're told. In any case, for these old married couples, spring brought instead thoughts of daytripping. We decided that rather than go to Bear Mountain or West Point or some place mundane like that, we'd be a bit more renegade and start our spring trips off by heading for the Museum of Cartoon Art up in Westchester County.

The "heading for" part, sad to say, took us rather longer than we'd hoped. Port Chester, the home of the Museum, wasn't difficult to find, but thanks in part to my garbled telephone understanding of "Comly Ave." as "Connelly Ave.", we did do a lot of riding around the town. But some of the blame must lie with Handsome Jimmy Valiant, our trusty steed; he seems to have an uncanny knack for finding the, shall we say, seamier side of town. Well, I guess "slightly shabby" might be more accurate - we are talking about Westchester here, folks.

Ultimately, thanks to that tried-n-true system of asking someone directions (not as easy as you might think - people don't seem to walk around much in Westchester. I think "The Pedestrian" was set there,) we found our way to the Museum.

The building is only a short distance off a main road, but there's no sign directing would-be visitors to it. Whether this lack can be blamed on the Museum management or the City of Port Chester, I don't know, but it should be corrected. I suspect though that the condition of the side street must be laid at the city fathers' feet: cowpath really describes it better than road. But when you finally reach the gates of the Museum grounds, you really feel that your efforts were worthwhile. You follow a winding driveway to a parking lot (again, this needs attention - some signs showing exactly where parking is allowed and a marking off of spaces would be a big help) at the crest of a hill, where you can look down on a striking view. The Museum itself is quite a treat for the eyes as well. Originally owned by the Hearst Foundation, who donated it to the Museum, it's best described as a small mansion. As a matter of fact, it's rather like a miniature castle, and I'm sure it could be a tourist attraction on its own.

We entered the Museum through their shop, which is okay since it guarantees that you'll be tempted into buying something, and I'm sure they need the money. My impression is that most of their income must come from their sales and from memberships, rather than from admissions. One reason that I say this is that they're very sloppy about collecting their entrance fee. If you weren't aware that there's a charge before you arrived, you would

CHARLENE KUNKEL

PLOY II

certainly suppose that admission is free - frankly, it's the only museum I've ever gone to where I've had to search for someone to take my money. Also, they don't supply paper bags for purchases, which seems to me to be a false economy. With no way to tell who's paid for an item and who hasn't, and with the natural congestion of a combined entry way and store, it's just an invitation to shoplifters.

Once you make it inside, the interior of the building proves to be as appealing as the outside - ornately carved woodwork, including fireplace mantles, equally adorned ceilings, delicate chandeliers, decorative glass panels in the doors. It's easy to see that a lot of work went into the restoration of the interior.

Somehow, though, the contents of the Museum don't quite live up to their housing. Although I admit that part of the problem may lie with ourselves and our preference for comic book art over comic strip work and the exact opposite emphasis here, I don't think that that's the whole story. We all certainly have a better than average acquaintance with comic strips and I know that I at least have a comic strip habit of long standing. My family has always been big newspaper buyers, and one of my earliest memories of my grandad is of his stopping by our house after Mass with a pile of Sunday papers (this was when New York City had a fine selection of newspapers), including my early favorite, the old Journal American. Their color comics featured Prince Valiant on the back page, and such venerable strips as The Katzenjammer Kids and Snuffy Smith inside. Indeed, my somewhat compulsive reading habits led to my reading every strip in every paper we received for years. Also, the fact that various members of my mother's family had worked for King Features Syndicate over a period of some years meant that many of their characters were also familiar to me as faces on Christmas tree ornaments and ash trays, stars of books, and even Christmas dinner guests (as drawn by Mal Foster) inside the covers of a special edition of A Christmas Carol. I own most of these items myself now. So lack of interest wasn't the cause of my disappointment.

One problem is that although a general exhibit is certainly a requirement, I really think that to get the feel of a strip you have to read more than a daily or two, or even one Sunday page. I realize that there are space limitations, but then why do they devote an entire room to children's cartoons? It can't be on the excuse of general appeal, since I found it to be easily the least crowded room there - usually deserted, as a matter of fact. Propagating cartooning by encouraging kids? Possibly, but there's got to be a better way to do it that wouldn't waste an entire room. The building is lovely, but not large. I think that possibly a rotating exhibit system might be the answer, and the children's cartoon room the ideal location.

Say, for example, that one week (or month, or whatever) the show features the "Gasoline Alley" strip. I think I'd try to show one complete story line, and also an overview to give a sense of the day-to-day life and aging of the characters, since that's what is outstanding about the strip. Perhaps also I'd try to draw some comparisons between the work done by the originator of the strip, Frank King, and how it's been handled by Bill Perry and Frank Morris since King died. If the Museum did not have the strips to manage this (and after all, they'd hardly be able to have a large

PLOY III

selection of every strip in existence - or even of what you might call the major ones), it seems to me that they'd have the contacts to do some borrowing on a limited time basis. And although all originals would be very nice, well, if they're not available I think that that can be lived with, too. Also, a display of novelty items connected with the strip could be interspersed. Stills from the motion picture, some of the toys that were marketed, etc. could surely be obtained.

Not only do I think that this would be acceptable to the purist, I really believe that it would make it more interesting to the general public - and like it or not, for a museum to prosper the interest of the general public is virtually a necessity.

This could tie into other projects as well. Presently, the Museum seems to have different guest speakers on a regular basis. The day we were there it was Milton Caniff, of Terry and the Pirates, etc., fame. They did have a special selection of his work on the stairway landing, but aside from being awkward for obvious traffic reasons, there just wasn't the room to show very much. However, had they been able to devote an entire room to a show of his work (or a particular facet of it) as part of a rotating exhibit set-up, the results might have been really outstanding.

Despite the improvements we all felt could be made, there were lots of things that we enjoyed. I especially liked the older strips that were on display, as well as the selection of humorous panels. Small exhibits on "how a comic book is made" and on animation were appealing, too. And the continuous showing of cartoons in a particularly beautiful film room was a lot of fun.

Considering that many well-known people in the cartoon field are connected with the Museum, it seems inevitable that it will get itself together and iron out the few essentially minor problems that it has. Ultimately, the Museum should not only become a mecca for east coast comic art fans but also attract the natural interest of a public that's grown up with Dagwood and Blondie and visits daily with Broomhilda. With this kind of a broad base combined with a dedicated core group, increasing success and growth seems assured.

-- Charlene Kunkel

KATZENJAMMER

JOYCES DRIVING REIGN

I don't drive. The reason is that I don't see very well, as those who've had me peer my-
optically at their convention name tags can attest. If you hear that I've gotten a li-
cense, you'd better turn yours in at the nearest motor vehicle bureau -- and you might
consider walking there. You don't want to chance ending up on the same highway as an
auto driven by me.

My inability to drive creates some difficulties, but frankly, they're low on the list
of problems caused by my poor vision. I'd much rather be able to reliably recognize peo-
ple the second or third time I meet them than climb behind the wheel of a Buick.

However there are times when a car would come in handy, even in transit-rich New York,
so Joyce volunteered to be the one to learn. This was no casual offer, since people have
been telling Joyce all her life that she's incapable of handling a car. I've never
learned how her friends and family reached this conclusion, but those who know her gener-
ally place "Joyce Can't Drive" right after "Thou Shalt Not Kill" in their roster of be-
liefs.

So Joyce began spending an hour and a half each Saturday morning with instructors
supplied by the Auto Club of America. Not, I hasten to add, that Joyce was wearing them
out. Her first teacher moved to a different city, the second made her too nervous and
the third saw things through to completion. These jaunts through jammed Brooklyn streets
taught Joyce how to drive in traffic, park in tight spots and explain why she would not
like an "advanced lesson" in a motel on the way home.

Wouldn't it make a wonderful story if I told you that Joyce passed her first test
with flying colors and has been awarded the post position in next year's Indianapolis
500? She didn't pass the first time. But maybe that makes it an even better tale -- in-
dominable woman conquers trauma and an initial setback to gain ultimate triumph.

Like many new drivers, Joyce came down with a severe case of car fever. On our strolls
through Brooklyn Heights, her gaze would linger lovingly on an Olds Cutlass or a Datsun
280Z there. The neighborhood's affection-starved cats were unceremoniously shunted aside
in favor of sleek fastbacks and stately limousines.

Buying a car isn't very practical, because of high costs for insurance and parking
and the existence of the fine intra-city transit system. Our forthcoming trip to Poplar
Bluff, Mo., was another matter, however, so we decided to get a one-day rental for prac-
tice as soon as Joyce got her license. We arranged for the car with a local agency and
motored out to Long Island to visit my aunt and uncle and, mostly, let Joyce get some
driving time.

Apart from a few minor wrong turns, our day in the country was blissfully unevent-
ful. Who would have blamed Joyce if, intoxicated by the new car smell of our snow-white
Zephyr, she had mentally congratulated herself as she pointed the little car toward home.

ARNIE KATZ

Katzenjammer -- II

It was 4:00 pm, WABC was playing the Top Three in endless rotation on the radio and life was absolutely beautiful.

We didn't know the best route home, but then, we weren't in any particular hurry. Joyce consulted her stack of crisp new maps, and we were off. We bounced down Union Turnpike, roared along Queens Boulevard and eased into the traffic on the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. Supreme confidence radiating from her smiling face, Joyce opened up her little white car. Soon the BQE was whizzing by at unheard of speeds -- 20, 30 and even 40 miles per hour.

We must have reached escape velocity, because the next thing we knew we were crossing a largish body of water. This was a bad omen, because there is no water between Nassau County and Brooklyn.

We took it as the siren call of adventure. After threading through the one-way streets which abound in lower Manhattan, we headed back across the same bridge. We admired the New York City skyline and the lime-green subway train that was also making the crossing. All was serene.

The Brooklyn end of the bridge was evidently constructed with some sort of space warp, because we found ourselves in a different neighborhood than the one we had passed through going the other way. It was an area of old buildings and narrow streets, which I guessed might be Williamsburg. We peered anxiously through the gloom for a landmark. It shouldn't have surprised us not to find one, since neither of us had ever been in Williamsburg. Joyce hunted for street signs at every intersection, but we never saw a name we could locate on one of our maps.

By 6:00 pm I had determined three things: Our lights weren't on despite the darkness, the neighborhood was getting worse with each passing block, and we were 100% solid lost.

Trying to be rational, I decided to deal with the problems in the ascending order of importance in which they had occurred to me. "Turn on the headlights, Joyce," I suggested to my trusty pilot.

"I can't," my trusty pilot replied. "I don't know how."

"Whad'ya mean, you don't know how?" Well, perhaps my voice did carry a touch more terror than was strictly necessary. But it was dark.

Besides, I had thought the driving school was supposed to take care of such things. I naively believed they would have devoted at least one of those expensive lessons to essentials such as how to turn on lights, adjust the seats and other rituals known to motorists. What's the fun of joining the elite ranks of drivers if they don't show you the secret handshake?

"So try some of those levers," I said with too much impatience. After a couple of honks and a pulse from the ceiling light, we could see very clearly in the twin beams of our headlights that we were lost.

In case you had any lingering doubt, I was also unsuccessful at turning us in the direction of prettier scenery. We meandered through Jewish slums, Black slums, Puerto Rican slums and slums filled with people I couldn't quite identify. Did you know that there is a slum somewhere in Brooklyn populated by little blue people with square heads? It's true. We were there. Yet whatever the race, creed or point of origin, there was a cer-

Katzenjammer -- III

tain universality about it all. Wherever we traveled, they laughed at our pathetic little white car and called us turkeys.

As our car creapt through the Land the American Dream Forgot, dodging the larger potholes when we could, I began to think about Roger Zelazny's "Amber" books. I wondered if we were driving through the "shadows" of alternate probability worlds in our clean machine. Would we, I mused, ultimately reach the Amber of this particular universe: the Ultimate Slum?

The more we drove, the worse it got. Soon we were traversing boulder-strewn with grass growing in the cracks. The roads looked as though they hadn't been touched since World War II. In fact the area looked like the recent site of an especially fierce firefight. We imagined terrorists lurking in every doorway, ready to pounce if we had to stop for a traffic light.

The nadir -- unless you count our trip in the wrong direction down a one-way street -- was reached when we inched down a dark street only to find ourselves at a dead end in the middle of a graveyard. There was only one other car in sight, and we doubted the couple inside would be pleased if we knocked on their windshield for directions.

As the full significance of our latest predicament came home to her, my companion metamorphosed into a female Mario Andretti. The very same woman who, only a week earlier, had solemnly sworn that she would never, ever perpetrate a U-turn gunned the motor, cut the steering wheel sharply and spun us around with a maneuver which would have brought tears of joy to her instructors.

We laid rubber for about six blocks as we thundered toward new adventures.

Once we had returned to the relative safety of the ordinary slums, we pulled over to the curb and once again spread our maps all over the front seat. This time, we were actually able to find our location. It was a good thing, too. My calculations showed that we were no more than a couple of blocks away from driving right off the northern edge of our street guide. While not quite as serious as driving off the edge of the world, I have no doubt that that this would have kept us wandering the byways of Brooklyn for many years to come.

Getting back to our apartment was an anti-climax. All we had to do to get back to civilization from where we were was to turn right at the very next corner and cruise 20 blocks right into downtown Brooklyn. From there, we were on familiar ground. Minutes later, Joyce was making a stylish parallel park right in front of the canopy of our beloved apartment house.

As I bolted from the car and bent to kiss the welcome mat in front of the building, Joyce said, "Say, there's still a half-hour before 'The Bob Newhart Show,' wanna go for a ride?"

I pretended I didn't hear her.

-- Arnie Katz

Fourplay -- IV

be watching "Wrestling from the Olympic," perhaps idly speculating about who might be under all those masks, and then -- pow! -- something flashes across the screen in a commercial that can't possibly be shown on TV. I sit there, giving Joyce a little sidelong glance to see if she's registering this event. I think about asking her something like, "Hey, were those people really doing what I thought it looked like they were doing?" But I never do ask, because my eyesight is so bad I might easily mistake something almost innocent for a shocker, and I'm kinda shy.

Speaking of shockers, how's this: We all wear our hair differently than when you last saw us! I told you it was a shocker.

Charlene: Not only that, but Handsome Jimmy has a different set of tires. But seriously folks, I may be a bit too far gone to add anything further to "Fourplay" at this point, since I've just caught myself about to sniff the Liquid Paper.

Joyce: I'd write a funny item about glue, only it wouldn't hold together.

Bill: You learn to look at things a little differently once you get past midnight. Suddenly it seems so clear. I must have been dense, but all this time I never once noticed. But now I know. Life only finds its ultimate finality when eclipsed by the shadow of death. I know now. I began by getting into shape. Push-ups, sit-ups, endurance tests. I got back to my old Golden Gloves weight. Stopped eating garbage. Stopped smoking. And I took every bottle of booze in the house and poured every ounce down the cat's throat. And as she died, convulsing horribly in my hands, I looked into her swimming eyes and heard her say, "Thank you." And then: "I love you."

I walked the quiet streets of New York, with its scum and depravity, and wondered how a man like God could let such a sordid organ exist. But wait, I think... Of course! That's what He's been telling me! I wonder why I didn't understand that 10 minutes ago? But now I go to do God's work. To de-worm the corrupt apple. To commune with my victims (masters?) in a funereal Disco-Macabre, candles held by a young devil, music pounding in my head! MY GOD, IF ONLY THIS POUNDING WOULD STOP!!!

Arnie: I ask you, isn't this something? Put yourself in my shoes. You're zipping along, adding comedic flourishes here and there, when suddenly one of your co-conspirators goes bonkers. Cracks Up. Flips out and begins reeling off a precis of "The First Deadly Sin" laced with the subtle nuances which only the mind which is about to bring the Clonemaster to Daredevil fans everywhere could properly divine.

Although I am indefatigable, hardened by years of doing heavy fanzines filled with light thoughts, it seems that the other three stars have now traveled beyond the point at which communication with you is still possible. They just sit there, giggling helplessly, while they take turns sniffing at their giant, communal bottle of Liquid Paper. They would, perhaps, look like coke freaks with the little flakes of Liquid Paper clinging to their nostrils, except, of course, that it is green. (For messing up on green paper, of course).

And with that one last, outrageous lie about the three luminaries who help make this all possible, I guess it's time to bid you adieu until the second exciting issue of Four Star Extra, when we will have as our theme: "The World of Kids."

FOURPLAY

(Continued from page 2 -- still Bill in the hotseat)

when the source (or sources) of the entanglement are determined, it is invariably a driver (or drivers) in the cockpit? As someone who rides regularly in what has been known, even centuries ago in the days of four-seater chariots as the "death seat," I think I know a little more about the subject than some driver (or drivers) does (or do). But if I want to talk about Panther Women, then damnit, I'll talk about Panther Women.

But just so you don't think I'm talking out of my hat, let me tell you about a few of the vital functions I serve in my capacity as a "death seat" occupant. For one thing, I have to swear and howl at the numerous microcephalics, humps and all-purpose nitwits who today command the highways (or bi-ways) of this nation. For another who is it that answers that eternal question, "Anything coming on the right? I can't see." They can't see, but they drive cars. Nuff said.

Arnie: Actually, Bill, I don't think you're taking your thesis far enough. Not only do we passengers perform functions which are vital to the driving experience, but each passenger seat carries with it a unique seat of responsibilities. This is made obvious by the fact that, though I don't drive, I don't see either. So no one -- at least no one with any sense -- ever says to me, "Anything coming on the right? I can't see," because I can't see anything either.

My job, as the one who sits directly behind the Death Seat Passenger, is to dispense sage wisdom laced with trenchant wit, a task for which I am eminently suited by both breeding and temperament.

And while you're talking about Panther Women, Bill, let us hear a few words in praise of Iris Chacon.

Charlene: Anyone who believes that you "step on one pedal with one foot and the other pedal with the other" had better stick to Iris Chacon.

Bill: Iris is just fine by me! You see folks, what it appears to be is that the FCC, for reasons of its own, does not bother to monitor either the commercial time or programming content of the programs on UHF, particularly the outstanding product offered by channel 47 here in New York City. The average viewer can treat himself to softcore porn, frontal nudity and even kinky sex at any time of the day or night.

Of course, this is all in keeping with the FCC's new "access" policies. Apparently, a filthy-minded hispanic has gotten access to a small-time network. That's right, gang, it's a network! So check out those TV logs in your home town for such authentic nuggets of crypto soft- -- and if you're very lucky -- even hard-core porno fixes as "El Show de Iris Chacon," "Cine Sinestro" and "Super Show Goya."

Regarding commercials, the advertising time on these stations can be unbelievable. Ch. 41 here, also Spanish language, has been known to show 20 minutes of commercials in a half-hour show (especially their wrestling program which originates from Los Angeles). So I say to the FCC: Do something about those ads! (But forget I mentioned Iris.)

Joyce: I think it's shortsighted not to admire Iris Chacon for the high-minded entertainment she provides, especially when compared with the new sitcoms we've been seeing on the regulation networks this spring.

Arnie: Those Spanish language stations are pretty mind boggling. I mean, you can