

KARL'S CHILI

The first time they served Karl's chili at the bar the Long Beach steam plant nearly had to shut down. The day shift had dined at the 'Niner and had had to report en masse to the infirmary.

Yesterday, after a blessed interval of years, marked the return of Karl's chili.

Don't get me wrong, it was delicious, especially with extra handfuls of onion and healthy doses of Louisiana cayenne pepper.

It was so good, in fact, that I had a second bowl. Now what kind of friends could John and Gordon be, who sat there and allowed me to consume that second bowl?

When I pulled into the yard my girlfriend came rushing to the door: "Gerry," she cried, "what are you doing home so early on a drinking night?" "I ran out of Maalox," I said.

"But you carry an extra box in the car?" "I went through that hours ago."

It was only seconds later that the lights went out all over Long Beach.

FADING IN THE STRETCH

i was astounded this evening, over dinner, to discover that my wife, maureen, has been devouring great chunks of an astronomy textbook. i've never considered her stupid, anything but, but i used to be able to count on her to restrict her scientific interests to astrology which, of course, i could dismiss with spurious ease. now she lectures me, with fluent clarity, concerning anti-matter, black holes, spiral nebulae, and something called the big bang, by which, i am pathetically certain, she is not referring to me. she can draw you a nucleus or solar system to scale and has evolved a personal cosmogony, reduced, with the simplicity that characterizes true genius, to eternal polar forces and unlimited hydrogen.

it's bad enough to suddenly discover that your wife has surpassed you in intelligence, but,

when i tried to regain a little face
by explicating an overheard hypothesis involving
the sensing of magnetic fields by migratory birds,
she said, "well, what else do they have to do?"
apparently, i am not even to be left the punch-lines.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

She used to go home to her parents
four times a year for about a week or so,
which provided me with an excellent opportunity
for a little of the old getting-of-things-out-of-one's
system.

I'd write a little, drink a lot,
take my kids to a ballgame and a movie,
fall in and out of love at least once,

and by the time she returned
I'd be missing her, horny for her,
with things I wanted to say to her,
places I wanted to go with her --
just plain glad to have her back.

Today she announced that she's not going home this summer.

THE SOCIETY OF BACCHUS

There are those who taste wines
with the tips of their tongues,
while others cite the importance of bouquet
and yet others insist on a perfectly cleansed palate.

I taste wine with my ulcer.
Gallo, for instance, comes right back up, every Gallo,
including the wrongly praised Hearty Burgundy.
When they struck Gallo,
the farmworkers automatically raised the level
of California wines.

A nice Chenin Blanc, perhaps Charles Krug's,
or a mellow Barbera, most notably Louis Martini's,
not only stays down,
but will probably require only a tablet or two of Maalox
to relieve the discomfort.

A truly excellent Bordeaux rouge, however,
or a Chateauneuf-du-Pape, or, on occasion,
an exceptional Beaujolais village
will pass the ultimate test --