

TROUBLE

I had my camera and I took a shot through
the shop window
and a rather tall ugly lady
neck bent forward
ran out of the shop.

"what are you doing?"
she asked,
"what did you photograph?"

"I photographed the naked manikin,"
I told her.

"I'd rather you didn't take any more
photos," she said.

"all right," I said and I walked down
the street with my camera
with her staring after me.

I felt guilty and upset even though
I had done nothing really
improper.
it usually happened to me
at least once a day.

I turned, dropped to one knee
focused, and photographed her.
she waved her arms and screamed
and I shot her again.

the trouble with these people is
that their cities have never been
bombed and their mothers have never
been told to shut up.

GETTING MY MONEY'S WORTH

the water was cold and filled with broken seaweed
it looked strangely like little bits of broken shit
and nobody went into the water
and I told her,
"I'm going in. we drove one hundred and seventy miles
to get here and we are paying \$30 a night for a motel room
with a shower stall built for people 4 feet tall. I'm

going in"

"not me," she said.

I left her on her STAR WARS towel

I entered the water

it was full of small hard rocks

I walked in chilled

reaching down and splashing myself.

then the first wave came and I dove under

I could feel the bits of seaweed lashing against me

it had been a great hurricane

the best of the year

as I stood up, an unbroken mass of seaweed wound
about me.

I broke from the tendrils

turned and waved to her on the shore

beckoning --

come on in, chickenshit ...

I turned in time to dive under the new

breaker

then I swam for ten or fifteen yards
parallel to the shore.

I turned again and waved her in --

come on, show some guts!

she waved me off --

go on, be an asshole! not me!

I leaped high

breaking through and over the next wave.

Del Mar was a fine place

even though the racetrack was unlucky for me.

as I settled down upon the ocean bottom

my left foot stepped upon something soft

which appeared to be living matter.

I leaped away

falling backwards into the water

and the next wave passed over me.

I rolled over and was carried toward the shore.

I got up and walked through the broken seaweed

pulling my trunks up.

I walked over the rocks and onto the shore

then up on the sand.

"you didn't stay very long," she said.

"I stepped on something out there, it seemed

alive. I got the fuck out."

"dry off and lay down," she said.

"I'm going to shower. I've got to make the first
race."

"o.k.," she said, "I'll see you about the 5th.

I want to get some sun."

I walked back to the motel and got under the
4-foot shower. what had I stepped on? a dead
fish? an eel?

I got out and dried off, selected my short-sleeved blue shirt
tan pants
loafers ...
green bikini underwear ...

the good life of the California sportsman.

SLAUGHTER

the first seven rows were roped off for The Counsellors of Exceptional Children, the Airport Group, and the German Society.

it was a Saturday at the track and they were all talking at once, standing up, sitting down, waving, laughing.

when the winner of the first race came by, most of them leaped up and down screaming and some of them hugged each other.

it was difficult to believe that they all had the same winner.

I tried to pick the Exceptional Children people from the Airport people and the German people but they all looked very much alike, and as each race went by they became quieter and quieter, and some of them vanished.

by the last race only about one-ninth of them remained and they looked very tired and very sad and said nothing. they had learned something: losing one's money was very much like death and although the horses were very beautiful, it was easier being with the German people or with the Exceptional Children and to fly about the country at reduced rates.

the racetrack was finally nothing to jump up and down about and to scream and hug each other about. it got dark and it got cold and the wind came off the Sierra Madres, and as they put them into the gate for the last race, even a winner couldn't cure them now: the jocks hustle from the gate in various colors as the machines have shut down, taking the last bite, freezing the odds forever.

the favorites don't win enough
the longshots don't win enough
the medium prices don't win enough