

thought of how good and safe it is to have it there always, floating just behind and over the shoulder; my little girl saw the commercial and asked me if that was god; i figured this was as good a place as any to begin lessons on the preposterous inventions people have envisioned for creation; i said yes;

at first i was afraid i'd made a real mistake; everywhere we went she would constantly twist her head about looking for the blimp and ask "daddy, where is god?" i'd usually shrug my shoulders or reply "not around here apparently;"

and then occasionally at baseball games or watching football on t.v. we'd see the blimp and she'd say "daddy, there's god!" "yes, honey" i'd say "god's real big on sports;"

it was the simple twist of fate that saved me from eventually having to straighten out the malicious and fallacious aspects of my theological lesson; we were watching a show on t.v. covering the great moments of the twentieth century when the hindenberg filled the screen; "god" screamed my little girl "a really big god;" i pulled her in close to me; when it exploded she was terrified and threw her arms around me; "god blew up, daddy" she said; "yes, honey" i said, patting her on the back with my consoling hand "that was the last of the really big ones;"

the next time it arose was when we were driving down the 405 freeway where off to the side is a vacant area with a goodyear blimp secured to a platform centered in it; "daddy" she asked "why is god all alone by himself?" "protection, honey" i said "it's sort of a zoo;" "is god one of those endangered species?" she asked suddenly; i looked over at my little girl looking up at me as if finally demanding the real answer; "yes, honey" i said; "god's a dying breed"

SAFE INSANE

i've often wondered how safe and sane i am; does one establish the other; i live in seal beach in a tract home with my parents; i feel very safe here but have real doubts about my sanity; after all i'm twenty-six and entirely unable to support myself; i haven't even a realistic notion of how; even in elementary school i began to recognize my lack of career objective; i wanted to be a trash man; i am a trash man except that it seems to be my vocation to create it; at least my father thinks so; i just finished a play about my father and mother;

i suppose it's about me too; she gets drunk all the time and screams and finally tries to kill us but she can't bring herself to do it so instead she kills the republican mayor around the block for complaining about our barking dogs; she kills the dogs too; i showed it to my father; he asked me not to show it to my mother; don't want to give her any ideas he said; it's the 4th of july; i just heard an announcement on knac; there are no fireworks allowed in seal beach; not even the transportation of them; and that included the safe and sane variety also; seal beach; a nuclear weapons storage center and depot with a cute little beachy community coating; probably the hottest firecracker on the west coast; i'm glad to know people are looking out for my safety and my sanity; i've never felt so much at home

-- Murray McNeil 3

Seal Beach CA

CÉLINE BLUES for Ma Rainey

One day, about a week before Christmas, I think it was 1961, on a Friday afternoon, I sat on Santa's knee for the last time, in Southland Shopping Center. The day was cold, but not snowy, and my mother bought me a chocolate milk shake topped with a big cherry at the Woolworth's counter, and I looked out the big plate glass window and saw Santa walking down the sidewalk, and when he saw me, smiling, he smiled back bigger, and waved, and when that shake was gone, Mother took me to the little red hut with the frosted windows, and I told Santa what I wanted, but I don't remember what.

Kids could get their picture taken with Santa, for a dollar I think it was, but Dad was out of work, so that day lasts just in my mind, Santa handed me a candy cane, just as I started to come down from his lap, and turned his head just then, to be polite, and pulled down his beard and sneezed, which kept me up that night.

When I got up the next morning, probably about ten, that would have been a Saturday, the television said Santa would be making a Grand Appearance that afternoon at three at Southland Shopping Center, which I couldn't understand since I thought he was already there, but I wanted to go anyway, because television would be there, but couldn't since Dad was out of work, and so I sulked along the frozen street, feeling sorry for myself and wondering how Santa could pull his beard down, just to