

Juanita dropped her tea on the rug, and Ruth's jaw dropped open as the camera moved in for a close-up on Glen, on the blood that was squirting out of his chest with every beat of his heart.

In a week, when the shock of the ugly scene had worn off, many people would say that Glen got just what he deserved, and others, most of them the unsympathetic wives of inattentive middle-aged men, would say that the woman should have shot the girl, too.

BROILER BLUES

Ruth's meal, not to mention the rest of her evening out, was ruined when the cashier at The Broiler Steak House asked Ruth's husband Ellis if he and his wife would like the senior citizens' discount, and if their grandson might like a lollipop.

"We are not, dearie," Ruth snapped, "senior citizens, and this is not our grandson, he is our son." "Lollipop?" said little Roy. "Discount?" said Ellis. "How old I gotta be?" Ruth gave her son a swat on the rump and her husband a kick on his ass as the girl behind the register blushed and the manager of the joint grinned behind her shoulder.

Little Roy screamed bloody blue murder at not getting the offered candy, and Ruth leaned across the counter and grabbed the manager's tie and pulled him in until he and she were nose-to-nose. "And just what the hell," she asked him, "do you think you're smiling at, dufus?" giving his tie a hard jerk that tightened the noose until it inhibited greatly the circulation to his head. "I was smiling about," he gasped, "the free meal you and your family was about to receive." And then he passed out and fell on the floor.

Ruth, her stomach twisted into knots over the earlier unpleasantness, hardly touched her food, but Roy and Ellis touched theirs, devoured it and licked their plates clean and looked around for more. "This is great," said Ellis as he gave his bulging belly a pat. "I'm wonderin', you think if I told 'em it was your birthday, Ruthie, They'd roll out a free dessert?" A mental image of herself as a haggard and toothless old crone popped into Ruth's head as the superimposed calendar months and then years peeled off and flew away, and she took her plate of nibbled-at food and dumped it into her husband's lap, chased it with her iced tea.

Ellis grunted, "Ugh," then jumped up and brushed the ice cubes and french fries and chicken strips off his lap. As he slid back into his chair he said, "Then how 'bout I tell

'em it's mine?" as little Roy burst into a very loud 'Happy Birthday to You,' and the manager told Ruth and Ellis' waitress, "Get a cake over there quick, with candles, lots of candles."

SOMETHING'S GONE HAYWIRE WITH GRAVITY

A meteor landed in Clete and Juanita's back yard, leaving a ten-foot-diameter crater in the middle of the lawn. The Loma Alta Tribune ran a front page article and photo, and the local T.V. news station sent over a camera crew. The publicity drew crowds, and Clete, at his neighbor's suggestion, started charging admission and leading tours that skirted the circumference of the crater: "But don't get too close," he'd warn the folks. "Something's gone haywire with gravity in there.

How did he know? The college students who'd been bussed in to sift the hot dirt in search of meteorite chunks would unexpectedly bounce into the air and float and spin like astronauts, and — being college students — pair off and twirl into impromptu, upside-down, levitating lambadas, while the astronomer in charge screamed at them to quit grab-assing around and get back to work.

When the excitement died down, Clete had a swimming pool installed at a discount, because the hole was already there, and one evening when he and Juanita were sitting on lawn chairs on the patio, sipping tall drinks, listening to the pool filter's sighs, the water — all ten thousand gallons of it — rose up out of the cement-lined crater and wobbled into a gelatinous, sapphire globe that hovered, roof-high, and started to spin. Its equator bulged, and the ball flattened into an acre-wide disk before it broke into a billion droplets.

Clete and Juanita looked at each other, and Clete said, "Whoa!"

And about those college students: two of them sneaked down into the crater while the rest of the crew was on a lunch break and got naked and conceived a child. And you know what? That kid could fly; before he could walk, he could fly.

DIRTY MOVIE

Clete skimmed the pool with his net, scooping the June bugs out of the water. The trapped insects, their bodies the color of caramel drop Sugar Baby candies, their legs