

Rocky Arredondo Presents...

THE COBRA'S NOSE

Vol. 15

Tedious Little Snake Buttock

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The Cobra's Notes...

You grow up accustomed to things as they are—inexorable forces like American democracy, your parents' religion, and prime time television—and for years you would no more think about the presence or absence to these things than you would, say, of whatever function kidneys perform. But at some point you meet a kid whose parents don't own a TV and it *blows your mind*. And that's just the beginning. You take a good hard look at your friends' families and visits to their homes become something like travels to foreign lands. Homes with bountiful snack foods (and I don't mean fruit) and liberal television privileges are choice destinations, like Paris or Disneyland. Homes with no TV, no pop music, no artificial sweeteners, and a surfeit of books with no pictures are more like East Berlin in 1975. Somewhat easier to escape.

Anyway, you begin to appreciate that difference exists in the world. It exists in spades in Asia, for instance. And in your own culture you can learn to tolerate some of its manifestations (like sports fandom and New Yorkers) better than others (people who say "I've never really liked The Beatles" when they would if they ever really listened to them). But sometimes your own culture becomes different in tiny ways which you could have foretold if you had ever given them a second thought, and more piquant than tragic—not occasion for therapeutic grief but a passing, "oh...oh that's too bad."

The death of Charles Schulz is such a change.

Peanuts strips ran daily for 52 years, over 18,000 in all. I've racked my brain and haven't thought of anything in arts or entertainment quite comparable. Word by word, image by image, other artists have been more prolific, profound, or popular; but Schulz's persistence is hard to beat. Wars have been won and lost, nations have risen and fell, billions of people have been born, billions have died in fifty-two years. And for every single one of those days a *Peanuts* comic strip; even during Schulz's infrequent vacations, *Peanuts* could be found in its allotted place. Every day, for fifty-two years.

Not that *Peanuts* commanded the sort of dedication on the part of the reader that fifty-two years of continual publication would imply. The *Peanuts* gang were like childhood acquaintances who never left home, never went to college. You're glad enough to hear from them or run into them from time to time, but wouldn't necessarily seek them out. If you happened to want them you knew where to find them, every day, for fifty-two years.

And like those old acquaintances you don't talk with too often because they never seem to have anything new to say, *Peanuts* ran in familiar cycles. The Great Pumpkin didn't show? Lucy pulled the football away? Charlie Brown's team lost again? Of course. Over the years, though, the repetition became ritual in an epic of frustration; gestures of unwarranted and unrewarded faith and hope. As long as Charles Schultz was



productive, there was a chance that ball would be kicked. He always said it wouldn't, but now it *can't*. And that's different. After fifty-two years, Schulz's brief farewell and refusal to satisfactorily conclude any of the story cycles he set into motion was a wholly predictable disappointment, but still faintly sudden and shocking.

So what is the lesson? Was *Peanuts* a fifty-two year disquisition on misplaced faith? Or as a faithful Christian, was Schulz proselytizing hope in a universe of kite eating trees? Is it finally a collection of trite aphorisms or recondite koans?

Constasy was always more a factor of *Peanuts* than change, and maybe it's fitting *Peanuts* drifted towards a Nirvana of constant, permanent, absence. I could ponder that, lying on my back in the grass. *Peanuts* (a title Schulz hated every day for fifty-two years) outlasted my faith in the ubiquity of American democracy, my parents' religion, and prime time television. I would still say that you'd have to go pretty dang far to reach someplace where Snoopy is unknown and bet it's not worth the trip. *Come on*, he's been in outer space. But now it's a corpus of kitsch artifacts, though a few, for me, have a relic resonance.

Like the strip in which Charlie Brown, sitting in an overstuffed chair next to Sally in her bed, looks up from the book he has been reading and asks, "Why would anyone say goodnight to the moon?" I never understood the question, but have always been touched by its implacable answerability.

Gone, and now the world is a little bit different; Charlie Brown, Snoopy, Linus, Lucy...How can I ever forget them...

Sharon C. McGovern
(Editor/ Publisher/ Cobra-in-Mourning)

Body Shop

(Not a Car Story)

At a tiny craft fair held in a Hollywood hair salon, I spotted a white T-shirt with a purple-for-wisdom chakra symbol on it which I thought Mom might like but it looked a little small. I hung it against my own body and saw it covered only a tiny portion of my torso. I looked at the tag and read "One Size." The T-shirts I wear all have two or three Xs on their labels, but I like to think that if I put my mind to it I could slip into a "One Size." Not this one, though. I wasn't confident that I could put my head into any of its openings and hesitated to imagine what other body parts might do to the stitching.

Still, Mom is less tall and more slender than I, and I do have a history of misjudging clothing sizes (which is partly why Pat's ex-wife's shirts kept ending up in the toddler pile on laundry day), so I thought I'd get a second opinion. I held it up for my splendid cousin Evelyn (whom I was visiting) to see and asked if it would fit my parent.

"Well," she said, "She could put it on. But, ew."

An image popped into my brain that made me drop the shirt on the salespersons' table and back away from it muttering, an image that launched a thousand episodes of Ricki Lake and Jenny Jones, an image of my gentle mother decked out like a waitress at Hooters.

Now let me emphasize, Mom is plenty svelte. She certainly could have *worn* that shirt, but if any one of you would not prefer to see your mother (or aunt) dressed in something tasteful that drapes and blouses please keep it to yourself.

"I don't understand..." I stammered. "The tag says 'One Size'!"

"It's this *town*," Evelyn's good friend Jude (who made that cunning green and black glass bead necklace I wore last week) explained. "I have a friend who keeps herself so skinny that her doctor told her she couldn't have children unless she put on a few pounds, and in the shops here she wears a *medium*."

I hate to make generalizations or employ clichés unless they strike me as funny at the moment, but the grim, hackneyed truth is that LA County dresses like the habitués of Axis/Radius on a Saturday night twenty four hours a day. Body consciousness is The Law. By the time the woman in the booth next to Jude's (a stranger to us all) stripped down enough to flex her newly empowered triceps in our direction I was ready to buy and wear a nun's habit forevermore if only I thought there was a chance of finding one my size in that *town*.

As we have learned from *The Thin Red Line*, there is opposition in all things (no wait—that was The Book of Mormon) and so the LA hyper-awareness of physique has an upside. And that is the population gets bored tormenting their bodies and occasionally will pamper them. I'm not in the LA area much, and I certainly don't visit to jog or eat lentils. But I have to confess this pampering business hadn't really occurred to me either before Jude endorsed the services of a masseuse who was working at the craft fair. She was only charging \$15 for fifteen minutes, which I was given to understand is a very good value. Evelyn was convinced, and though it is my habit to follow her example slavishly whenever I am in town, I hesitated. (cont. on pg.4)



Get those Blockbuster Rental Cards Ready!

Last night, I watched a very special episode of "Roger Ebert & the Movies," in which that Happy Fool of movie reviewing and genuine master Martin Scorsese named their favorite films of the 90s. The highlight of the program was when Scorsese named *The Thin Red Line* the second best of the decade, and the HF struggled to pretend he liked and understood it when it is clear from his original review that neither was remotely true.

Anyway, if he gets to make a list, so do I. I can't promise it wouldn't change with one more viewing of *Dead Man*, say, but here it is and I don't think any of you would loathe more than sixty percent of them.

In descending order(10-1):

Groundhog Day
Exotica
London Kills Me
Barcelona
Un Coeur en Hiver
Defending Your Life
Heavenly Creatures
(tie)Goodfellas/ The Age of Innocence
Batman Returns
The Thin Red Line

Now, match the title to the image. 🎬



Sam, I'm so Glad you Came!

To the left, Samuel Wenger, son of Katy and Curt. You can tell just by looking at him that he has charisma to burn and will either make his parents very proud or have a criminal empire by the time he is six. Which may make his parents proud as well as long as he is a good little earner. Congratulations and best wishes to you all. 🏠🏠🏠



Serving Thy Insult Needs

My regular insult suppliers, Magi and King James the Very Important Something or Other Amen, have been busy launching a product (if this involves champagne or any other beverage of interest they have not let on) and neglecting their Cobra duties. But as the need for fresh insults is bottomless and a Shakespearian Refrigerator Magnet Kit in the right hands can be an endless source of cruelty and fun, renowned wit Evelyn Jensen has offered the following crop of barbs:

Tedious Little Snake Buttock
Perfidious Biter of Sheep
Thou Creeping Goat Scab
Quintessence of Puke

In the bright or darkling hour you will find that these have awesome power, sewn with reason's silver thread your foe you'll surely rip and shred. Go get em, baby.

(cont. from pg. 2) As a rule, I do not like to be handled by people I know, much less strangers, but at some point in my journey from Scottsdale I pulled a muscle in my back and it nagged. My friend Pam, who is a licensed masseuse always recommends grabbing the sorest spot and applying as much pressure to it as possible. (My brother Pat, who is a licensed masseur, never touches or gives any massage advice to family members as he considers it creepy.) Anyway, my back hurt and the more I suffered the better massage sounded, so Evelyn and I put our names on the list.

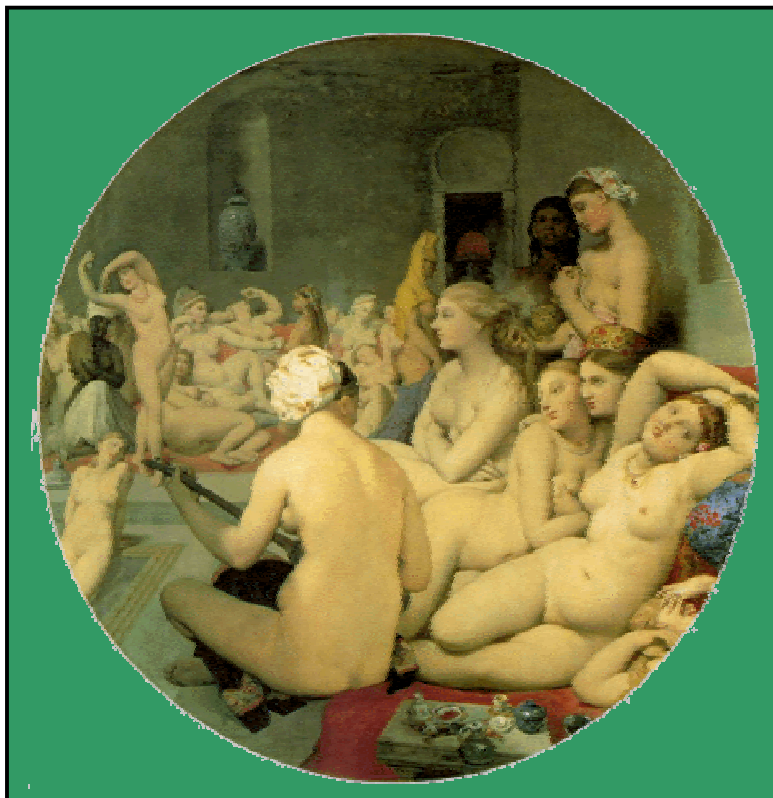
Evelyn let me sign up first, so when the masseuse was finished with the client before me I started hanging around the barber's chair she was using that night. She refused to acknowledge me. I walked back and forth as close to her as I dared and tried to catch her eye, but she was even better than I at passive aggressive exclusion tactics (*impressive*). I drifted back to Evelyn and Jude and asked if I was exuding fear, or distrust, or was maybe looking particularly untouchable that day, and Jude told me to relax—the masseuse was just taking a break, resting her hands, becoming reenergized, anyway, don't take it personally. Which turned out to be the case—she called me over when she was good and ready.

She had me sit and told me her name, which was Lune. She had a Balkans accent that moved me to respect everything she said and not ask questions. She went on to say she used a combination of Swedish and shiatsu massage. She paused, so I said, "Great!" "I will find and direct your inner energies," she said. Great! Then she started with the poking, kneading, and squeezing. She got me in a half-nelson and interrupting my flashback to childhood traumas asked, "How do you feel?" Great, great.

Finally she released me saying my energies were sufficiently redirected. I was willing to believe they would flee under her grip, and I did feel...different? better? Something like that. I made a couple of tentative inquiries to Evelyn and Jude hoping to confirm that everything had gone as it should, and my impression was it did. In fact, they wanted more and Jude had a gift certificate for the place they could get it—Burke Williams—Beyond the Spa. Excitement built as they discussed the various treatments, and though it sounded more like something for Fraiser and Niles than little me, my back was feeling better and I figured I could go for some more therapy. The craft fair ended Jude's husband joined us for dinner, and all the while Evelyn and Jude pronounced and extolled the impending wonders of Burke Williams. When the dinner party broke up and Evelyn and I returned to her home, she produced a Menu of Services from BW, and described each in rapturous detail. We both selected the hour long Spa-Style Facial, then rested up in anticipation of the procedure.

Unfortunately, Jude would not be joining us as she couldn't find her gift certificate which wouldn't normally be a big deal but this was the second one she had lost this year and it was getting ridiculous, so Ev and I set out alone.

Burke Williams is located in an alleyway, which sounds shady but is quiet and private. When you enter, you



can't hear noise from the street, only the ancient sound of trickling water in a fountain. A black clad attendant greeted us in hushed tones, and assured that Evelyn knew the routine, waved us back to the depths of the salon. The rooms got dimmer and dimmer as we progressed until we reached the dressing rooms, and there the darkness was a blessing as this adventure was to take place in the semi- and not semi-nude. Fortunately, what light there was was warm and flattering, and we were to wear olive drab towels and robes bound to make our complexions glow in contrast. I changed more quickly than Evelyn, so I wandered off to explore.

No Roman bath could have been better stocked. Everywhere I looked was a pile of neatly rolled towels, a bowl of fruit, a pitcher of water with citrus sliced into it, a mirror, or spigots which ran with any skin or hair product you might want. I was working my way through the skin ones when Evelyn caught up with me and suggested we proceed to the sauna. "Dry or steam?" she asked when we got there. Dry sauna to me is my car on a summer day, so that was an easy choice. We hung our robes, dressed in towels, and went in for some pore expanding. We had a nice chat and got some good sweating in. Then I got a steam burn on my shin and we decided we had had enough of that indulgence and moved to the Jacuzzi.

This was the most interesting part of the journey for me because in the Jacuzzi nudity is compulsory, and remember I am vacationing in Boob and Bod Central. But it was nothing like the shameless streets and clubs, or like the painting above (sorry, that was a bit of a tease). Absent bustiers (not to mention implants), miniskirts, and, you know, *that* sort of pump, everybody's body fit into a comfortable middle area. No marble goddess nor Oprah grotesquery blew the curve. Evelyn and I looked slightly better than everybody else, though.

Cookie, my designated spa technician, fetched me at this point for my Spa-Style Facial. We got along famously. She protested when I apologized for the repulsive condition of my skin, and was good enough to gross me out with anecdotes of far worse hygiene (cont. on pg. 5)



Schulz Results

In honor of Charles Schulz, Cobra Research conducted an informal poll of favorite characters. Snoopy came out way ahead, with six and one half votes, which more than doubles second place Linus's tally of three. ReRun finished a surprising third with two votes, my own and my divine Aunt Jan's, which leads me to suspect third child sympathies were at work. Woodstock got one and one half votes, and the following got one vote apiece: Sally, Schroeder, Peppermint Patty, Marcy, and Charlie Brown. The Big Toe of in the Know cast his vote for The Little Red Headed Girl, which strikes me as perverse but not surprising. Lucy was mentioned a couple of times as somebody who seemed awfully like people in the voters' lives, but that's not the same as "favorite." Quite a number of fussbudgets refused to participate. This poll will go on line on The Cobra's Web Page as soon as Mr Enigma gives me the proper codes (www.geocities.com/thecobrasnose). Feel free to go there and stuff the ballot box for your favorite candidate.

I also asked if any particular strip stood out, and got this reply from Mom (who cast her vote for Peppermint Patty, by the way), "The one where Linus and Lucy are in the woods looking at the trees and Linus tells her that moss always grows on the north side of the trees. Lucy wonders how the moss knows to do that and then remarks that "Moss must be a lot smarter than it looks." Jim Flynn, in the careless manner of the *nouveau riche*, mentioned "Snoopy as the Red Baron." I think he should listen to that Royal Guardsmen song over and over until he gets it right. ****

(cont. from pg.4) offenders. She gave a shoulder, neck, and foot massage that was instantly recognized as correct by my unrefined sensibilities. She even offered to wax my pits for free the next time I am in town, that's the kind of sport Cookie is.

Speaking of wax, a feature of the spa which you really must try is the paraffin hand dip. Send all those wax museum horror movies and homemade jam mishaps to the back of your mind, this treatment feels wonderful and left my scaly mitts smooth and soft as a candle. I reluctantly left Cookie's ministrations at the end of the hour, and returned to the Jacuzzi to await the end of Evelyn's session. We sat in the tub for a while, then moved to this wonderful misty chamber and luxuriated like a couple of nymphs on a rock. I never imagined I could feel so relaxed stark naked in a public place.

Comfort within my own skin was as exotic as the green-lit waters of the Jacuzzi and the painted and engraved sandstone walls in that bubble of luxury, and nothing I ever expected to find in Southern California. It couldn't (and didn't) last forever, but I now know where to find it when I need it.

Mom in the Den of Sin

I fear I may have misrepresented Axis/Radius as the exclusive domain of the young and shapely. As with LA County, say, that is only its most conspicuous constituency. There are other types, like me, for instance, and on Tuesdays especially, old people—withered bald men who clutch highball glasses and haggard women in tight pants who dance way too close to my brother. So though my mother's age demographic is represented, that is the only thing she has in common with those people. That and she did go to Axis/Radius on a Friday night to see Pat in the Funk+Fashion show.

The mix was not as appalling as you might imagine. Mom was dressed in a subdued plum *ensemble* that looked warm. She gripped her purse strap and played cool. We arrived as late as we thought would be wise, but the show was delayed when the curtain that separated the porch from the temporary dressing rooms fell and proved more difficult to reattach than you'd think. Both Pat and Alyssa were in the show, which featured the clothes stylings of Kenneth Cole. Pat and I figured this was a safe show for Mom to see, no tight strappy leather get ups with dirty words emblazoned on them or anything like that. In fact, I am quite a Kenneth Cole booster, proud owner of three of his bags and a nice pair of shoes (thank you, Ross). The down side is...well how exciting could a designer be if I wear his label? The thrill of all those clever purse pockets would be difficult to dramatize from the stage.

The organizers must have had a similar thought, for the make-up and hair was ferociously over-compensatory. Pat and Alyssa got off light, with sort of a black eye patch painted on Pat, a red one on Alyssa (which I am thinking of adopting for my daily routine), and tasteful spikey 'dos. Other males got stuck with shaggy *faux* Mohawks and black lipstick, females with long wooly extensions and white lips. But no travesty of make-up or hair could disguise to Mom that Pat was the very best looking person on display, and that pleased her enough that she didn't opine about the morally deteriorating effect of loud, rhythmic music until we were in the car headed home. ΨΨΨΨ

End Nose...

Since the release of Vol. 14, I've learned a few things.

First: Sometimes whining and pleading really works. All that carrying on I did in *The Cobra's Notes* last month resulted in several expressions of good will, especially after the speakers had gotten certain cavils off their chests (eg, "your movie tome did go on just a wee bit" from Scott, "why are you writing about your shower here?" from Tiger (he said it a lot of times), and "Mike threw it away before I had a chance to read it" from Lauren). Pat Lang said she might consider renting *Eyes Wide Shut* some night (I hope this means she's forgiven me for recommending *Smile*), and Audrey's request to borrow *Revolver* was music to my ears. Mr Enigma, after making some positive statements about my future job prospects, accepted his *Cobra* with the merest sigh and said he wouldn't make any promises. A few days ago, though, he asked for "a bunch of pages of that *Cobra* thing" for an Acrobat experiment and remarked he was surprised to see the frequency with which his name was mentioned, so there is a chance that he will read at least part of it and have some complaints at a later date.

Second: There exists an honor even more glorious than having one's name on a list—having a special access *badge*. If my shirt weren't so light in value, you could see the one I was issued by my cousin-in-law, the lovely and talented John Murdy, in the picture . When you are on a list, you are only obviously important to the person with the list, these people consistently refuse to be impressed. Wearing a badge, you are manifestly Somebody. Even Xena will think so, and if you strike her as being of the right stuff, she will let you handle her sword. Then, the photographer will give you a discount on the photo he takes, and feel compelled to make flattering remarks about the image. And that wasn't even the most powerful badge. John was wearing one that made the underlings at Universal Studios quake with fear and let us into attractions *even after the show had begun*. That's got to make you feel good. Anyway, he needs something to fill the void in his heart left when he finished working on a project with Alf Clausen, composer for *The Simpsons*. "Alf used to call my house!" he lamented. But he should focus on the good things, the memories he has, the stories he can tell, and that I got a yellow *Simpsons* T-shirt out of it (score).

Third: I will never go on another date. I've never been a hot commodity on the social circuit, and in the past couple of years I've

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Use them.

contented myself with the explanation given in my astrology reading Mom gave me a couple of years back as a birthday present. Apparently the stars and planets are of the opinion that I will not find a man until I get my psychic/spiritual house in order. Frankly, that sounded pretty final to me, then I met the Magic Romance and Dating 8-Ball.

Evelyn and I were in a novelty shop outside Universal Studios waiting for John's meeting (not with Alf Clausen, alas!) to end, when we



Xena & Sharon Warrior Princess
I'm on the right, wearing my War Face

happened upon the accursed object. Evelyn picked one up and told me to think of a question re romance and dating. I replied and she addressed the cruel pink sphere, "Will Sharon ever have another date?" She shook it and turned it over, but only the edge of the tile was visible through the little window. The 8-Ball was reluctant to commit. Evelyn scowled at it, and shook it until a tile finally rolled over revealing the words, "NO WAY." "This 8-Ball is clearly defective," she said and picked up another one. She asked it the same question, shook it, turned it over, and it promptly replied, "NEVER."

So what can you do once the judgment of an astrologer and two Magic 8-Balls has been passed but submit? Though if you have any ideas to the contrary, please feel free to use any of the means to the left to contact me and tell me all about them.

Finally, please note that this issue is brought to you by Rocky Arredondo, who delivered on his promise of stamps. If you have sharp eyes, you may see Rocky handing Courtney Cox-Arquette a parcel in *Scream 3*. You don't have to be nearly as quick to note Danny Arredondo's stellar turn as "Security Guard" in the same movie. He turns up right before Jenny McCarthy gets slaughtered (I don't think I'm giving anything away, there). I'm looking forward to writing about *Scream 2* for Vol. 16, so if you haven't seen it yet and want to be prepared for an intelligent discussion of it's place in the horror genre, you've got about a month to do so.

Now, take care and be good. It may be early in the year, but Santa is watching.