

[Monologue]

## WHAT THEY LEARN IN SCHOOL

By Jerome Stern. This monologue aired March 17 on All Things Considered, National Public Radio's daily news broadcast. Stern is a professor of English at Florida State University in Tallahassee.

In the schools now, they want them to know  
all about marijuana, crack, heroin, and  
amphetamines,  
Because then they won't be interested in mari-  
juana, crack, heroin, and amphetamines,  
But they don't want to tell them anything about  
sex because if the schools tell them about sex,  
then they will be interested in sex,  
But if the schools don't tell them anything  
about sex,  
Then they will have high morals, and no one  
will get pregnant, and everything will be all  
right,  
And they do want them to know a lot about  
computers so they will outcompete the  
Japanese,  
But they don't want them to know anything  
about real science because then they will lose  
their faith and become secular humanists,  
And they do want them to know all about this  
great land of ours so they will be patriotic,  
But they don't want them to learn about the  
tragedy and pain in its real history because  
then they will be critical about this great land  
of ours and we will be passively taken over by  
a foreign power,  
And they want them to learn how to think for  
themselves so they can get good jobs and be  
successful,  
But they don't want them to have books that  
confront them with real ideas because that  
will confuse their values,  
And they'd like them to be good parents,  
But they can't teach them about families be-  
cause that takes them back to how you get to  
be a family,  
And they want to warn them about how not to  
get AIDS  
But that would mean telling them how not to  
get AIDS,  
And they'd like them to know the Con-  
stitution,  
But they don't like some of those amendments  
except when they are invoked by the people  
they agree with,  
And they'd like them to vote,  
But they don't want them to discuss current  
events because it might be controversial and  
upset them and make them want to take

drugs, which they already have told them all  
about,  
And they want to teach them the importance of  
morality,  
But they also want them to learn that Winning  
is not everything—it is the Only Thing,  
And they want them to be well-read,  
But they don't want them to read Chaucer or  
Shakespeare or Aristophanes or Mark Twain  
or Ernest Hemingway or John Steinbeck, be-  
cause that will corrupt them,  
And they don't want them to know anything  
about art because that will make them weird,  
But they do want them to know about music so  
they can march in the band,  
And they mainly want to teach them not to  
question, not to challenge, not to imagine,  
but to be obedient and behave well so that  
they can hold them forever as children to  
their bosom as the second millennium lurches  
toward its panicky close.

[Advice Column]

## A SKATEBOARDER'S GUIDE TO UNSTOKED PARENTS

From "Coping With Unstoked Parents," by Bonnie Blouin, in the October 1988 issue of Thrasher, a skateboarding magazine published in San Francisco.

**E**very month we receive dozens of letters from kids asking how to cope with parents who are less than obliging to their skating needs. Lack of parental support, in my opinion, is a far worse crime than any restrictive bounds placed on skaters by cops, neighbors, etc. The real sorrow of this never-ending saga is the amount of actual talent that is clipped and expunged by parents who refuse to acknowledge that skating is anything more than "a phase" or an annoying activity. This is an unfortunate hindrance to the progress of skateboarding.

### MOM'S PERSPECTIVE

Mothers are usually the main "stick in the mud" in a skater's household. This is likely due to the fact that when Mom was a teenager, skateboarding was a sprout, growing its first roots. Now, with her adult status and infinite wisdom, the thought of rolling down the street, much less popping an ollie railslide onto a bench, is unfathomable.

In other words, when Mom peers through the kitchen window to see you skating, she's not



[Newsletter]

## SURFING FOR JESUS

*From the March newsletter of the Calvary Chapel Surfing Association in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The organization, which was formed last August by James Gould, the youth minister of Calvary Chapel Fort Lauderdale, is intended "to meet the needs of the Christian surfer."*

**A**s you recall from last month's newsletter, we had three surfers from our team in the National Scholastic Surfing Association contest: Rob Craft, Matt Beaty, and Mike Murphy. It was the first contest for these three young surfers. The conditions that day were not what you would call perfect, but there were still some good rides. I want to congratulate the three of them for the courage displayed in entering. Matt Beaty had his foot sliced open the day before but still had the determination to go ahead with the contest. Thank God, Matt's foot is healing just fine.

Matt's determination reminded me of the Apostle Paul and all the physical setbacks he endured while traveling the world sharing the gospel. Paul had been stoned (with rocks) and left for dead; he had been exiled from many towns; he had been ridiculed; he had a problem with his eyes (thorn in the flesh); and he was sick and near death. Still he continued to do what he was called to do. "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men" (Colossians 3:23). So keep on keeping on, guys and gals who have been called by the Lord to minister.

The monthly meeting on the twenty-fifth went great. Pastor Bob joined us on that cold and frigid morning to share with us a teaching from the Word of God. Thank you, Pastor Bob. Perhaps the next time you join us it will be warm enough for you to paddle out to the lineup with us. That morning the waves were not exactly what we had hoped for, but it was still so beautiful, with the sun reflecting off the blue ocean. We left Ocean Reef Park and cruised up to MacArthur Park because we heard a report that there were bigger waves there. There were, and what a neat time of fellowship we had.

I hope to be able to get some T-shirts made soon. I'll have some information about that at the next meeting. Until then, keep surfing for Jesus!

going to think, "Johnny's doing indy nose picks much better today," because her comprehension of any trick is probably nonexistent. My own mother, who witnessed daily shredding in her own backyard for years, still cannot distinguish between front side and back side. So all your mom actually sees from a nonskater's eyeball view is you flailing about on four wheels. Tack on the "momism factor" and you are, in her eyes, narrowly escaping death.

### DAD'S PERSPECTIVE

Dad is usually a bit more lax, since as a youngster he was probably accustomed to the bumps and bruises of physical sports. But dads tend to have this scary notion that the only sports are football, basketball, and baseball, or whatever sport he himself may have excelled in as a teenager. Therefore, while he may tolerate the fact that you skate, he will usually come up with statements like "You won't get a scholarship riding a skateboard."

### DEALING WITH MOM AND DAD

Communicating with your parents is the only way to alleviate this tension and avoid further confrontation. You've probably noticed that Mom and Dad will usually rag on you the most during stressful moments: for instance, when they arrive home from the office after spending an hour in traffic, or after they've unsuccessfully attempted to perform appliance repairs better left to a pro. Feel your way around these moments. Wait till your parents are relaxed before you hand them your report card or ask them if you can go with Johnny to skate the new ramp.

Most importantly, you need to pick a quiet, casual time to say, "Héy, we need to talk." Ask them specifically why they disapprove of your skating and listen to their views. Naturally, they will mention things you disagree with, but keep your cool. After all, they are speaking from the "mom and dad eyeball" and it's up to you to enlighten them. Don't blow it by blurting out something drastic.

Approach them with confidence, speak clearly and with conviction. Make it understood, by your voice and your actions, that you are serious and expect some truthful answers. Parents will often blow off a sticky situation with a "I'm your mother and I said no" type response. Don't let it get to that point. This usually means they are ticked off or stressed out. Drop the subject and wait until they are calm to bring it up again. If they never seem calm, you'll just have to harsh it out. You have a right to express your views.

Once you know what your parents' views are, whomp 'em with your own. Elaborate on their objections and clear them up. If they mention that skateboarding is dangerous, explain the use



of safety equipment and falling techniques (rolling, kneeliding, etc.). If they exclaim that it's too expensive, offer to earn money. It is up to you to provide positive counterresponses to their objections.

The next step is explaining to them what skating means to you and why. They don't know what it's like to tweak a method air off the jump ramp. They don't know why it thrills you, day after day, to learn new moves and feel your board under your feet. You have to tell them.

Skating is more than just a sport, it's a way of life. Stick with it. Your parents will get the idea sooner or later, so keep your chin up and skate with pride.

[Memoir]

## MY BODY, MYSELF

*From "Portrait of the Artist as a Lion on Stilts," by Paul West, in the Spring/Summer issue of TriQuarterly, a special issue on "Writing and Well-Being." TriQuarterly is published at Northwestern University. West's novel Lord Byron's Doctor will be published next month by Doubleday.*

One lovely sunny morning in August 1984 I awoke rested and serene, but lazy enough to take my first cup of coffee in bed—or at least to try to. My lips refused to drink, to move. Within minutes my entire mouth was numb and the right side of my face was paralyzed. I could not swallow or speak clearly; I looked at my face in the mirror and saw the whole of it sagging jowly yellow, my eyes bulging, my expression ghoulish.

I was in fact having a transient ischemic attack (said fast as TIA), or a mild stroke. A clot, whipped up inside the heart during fibrillation, had blocked part of the blood supply to my brain. My pulse was 200, my blood pressure 200 over 150. In the ambulance I found my speech coming back, but my left arm and hand becoming paralyzed. The clot was on the move. My heart's atria have continued to fibrillate ever since and they always will, spurred on by an electrical malfunction in the sinus node, where one's pulse begins. I had probably been fibrillating undiagnosed for twenty years.

What got me into all this? Spending half a year in Arizona, I had felt so well that I stopped taking the half aspirin daily that had no doubt kept me uncoagulated for eight years; the stroke followed in the same year. There is also talk of rheumatic fever, undiagnosed when I was a child, as well as of too much coffee, liquor, cigars, and so forth. I take no stimulants at all

now and wonder why I took them in the first place; my brain is clearer, my mood sweeter, my stomach flatter. I regard my heart as a host regards an alien visitor trapped in his chest, but also as an irritable friend who has to be humored. Or else.

I had always had a sense of being intimately linked with stuff that I was not—if indeed I knew where I began and stuff left off. Possessed of an almost eerie sense of how different I was from earthworm, tree, and star, all of them opaque, I had an even eerier sense of overlap with them, not so much from reading as from primitive hunch. From my first chemistry set, I knew that I was an experiment too. I walked and breathed immersed in a world not mine, not made of me. With seemingly detached mind, I used a brain whose stuff was generally available. Something streamed through us all, and through other things, that was never itself, which is to say it had identities by proxy. It was permanent and we were expendable.

In intensive care, I, who had never known a night in a hospital, found myself not merely a part of all I had ever seen and known, as before; I was newly connected to it by wires, oscilloscopes, tubing, and big drafts of chemicals whose nature I would eventually ponder and marvel at, like the medium contemplating his or her own ectoplasm. Dispossessed is what I felt: dispossessed of even that cozy old intimacy with nature. It had been a luxury, a mental game, and now it was being played out, proven, on my pulses, taken outside of me and blown up big on screens and charts. I felt as if my marrow was being sucked out of me and had only been on loan. Nothing belonged to me that could not be revoked here in this functional room with only a curtain for a door: things, they, you, came in and out without warning. The transits were fast and unimpeded. The world outside the doorway, beyond the curtain, looked somehow vertically down. I lay in a horizontal shaft that not far away was bending at an angle to dispose of me. I hung on, not a cutworm or a lightning-struck tree or a star starting to run out of energy, but a something somehow without a destiny. The atoms that owned me had come into their own, loud in the squeak and ping of the big EKG machine close to my bed. I had ignored the fibers in the sinus node of my heart, and now they were thrashing in chaos. I had never even known about catecholamines, which could surge and boost my blood pressure to an almost lethal level. Now they had done their massive, silent roar through me, and I was weaker for their dominance. I was what things within me happened to. I was a guest in the throne room of juices and sludges, and it was