

# READER

Vol. 4 No. 18

SAN DIEGO'S WEEKLY

May 29 - June 4, 1975



— Jean Hector —

Two years ago the *Reader* had a story on an ashram of followers of the Guru Maharaj Ji on La Jolla Shore Drive. Since then lots has happened to the Maharaj Ji movement. There was Millennium '73, the convention of followers held at the Houston Astrodome. There was the rather shocking conversion to Divine Light of anti-war activist Rennie Davis. There was the pie thrown in Guru Maharaj Ji's face by an underground paper staff member in Detroit. There was the marriage of the 16 year old Guru to Marilyn Johnson, a United Air Lines stewardess from Imperial Beach. And now there has been the attempt by the Guru's mother and older brother to dethrone the young Guru, followed by suit and countersuit filed in civil court in India. Though supposedly wholly unrelated to these facts, the La Jolla ashram has in the meantime disappeared.

That isn't to say the San Diego Divine Light Mission itself has dissolved. Indeed, 25 or so of the followers gathered in the Park last week for a Premie picnic ("Premie" means "lover" in India," they explain). And Carly and Richard, two of the leaders of the San Diego Mission, are only too willing to renew their undaunted faith in Guru Maharaj Ji after the picnic in a room in Richard's pink house overlooking the canyon near Park and University.

"Sure, a lot has happened in the last few years. But as anyone who has received knowledge can tell you, the important thing is not the things that are reported in the papers, but the experience that has been given to us by the Guru Maharaj Ji. Everything else doesn't really matter."

Richard, a handsome carpenter in his twenties, says he came from Philly (as if you couldn't tell by his accent), spent several years in the Santa Cruz

Mountains, and while on a visit back East, met one of the Guru's *nahutmas*, or disciples.

"It was really weird. I saw this person with a total sense of peace. There were no games. I felt I was meeting the first person in my life that I could trust. I wanted to just stay around him. He said he had gotten his gift by being with the Guru about seven years."

Richard, like all those who have received knowledge, went first through a *satsang*, or truth-discussion with the mahatma. Then there was a "knowledge session," where the transformational experience took place.

"It's like you're finally aware of God, or the creative intelligence or force that unifies the universe. You know, I had had these feelings before that electricity was liquid, that our bodies were basically just energy, and that's what you realize — that there is this energy behind everything in the universe."

Carly, who works in a store in La Jolla, seems to be a few years younger than Richard. She is probably the archetypal Southern California searcher. She was raised a Catholic; her parents had some sort of travel service in Mexico. About 5 or 6 years ago she had been looking in lots of places for an answer to her anxiety about life's real meaning.

"I was living in Santa Barbara. It was the late '60's and I had decided that politics were useless. People just kept replacing those in power with the same thing, and the same things were happening. I began reading the Bible. I went to Hare Krishna meetings. I went to the Theosophical Society. I was doing Zen-Zen-Buddhist meditation. Then one day I saw this poster with a picture of the Guru Maharaj Ji saying he was coming to Santa Barbara. At the time I was having all kinds of mystical experiences. And I kept flashing on the Guru's face from the poster. So I went to

the meeting and it turned out it was cancelled. But I waited around and this girl asked me if I wanted to go to L.A. to see him. That was his first visit to the States and there were only 7 Guru Maharaj Ji followers then. After only a day of *satsang*, I knew. It just clicked. I received knowledge. It's too beautiful to describe. I can't. I'd had mystical experiences before, but this was it."

Carly, then, is one of the original American premies. She did a lot of travelling with the Guru herself, and she went to India twice for an intense period of *satsang* and service in the seat of the Divine Light — Prem Nagar, the City of Love. ("The organizational headquarters is New Delhi, but the religious headquarters is Prem Nagar, right near where the Guru Maharaj Ji grew up.") Carly says it was only in India where she's encountered any outright hostility. Though there are 3½ million who have received knowledge in India, there is even a political party that has as one of its main tenets hostility to Gurus. "It was the party that Shri Han, Guru Maharaj Ji's father, belonged to before he became a Perfect Master . . . India is the only place where I've experienced hostility. They stoned us there."

Though Carly and Richard insist that historical events have little to do with their religious experience, they explain that if the Guru's mother and brother, who have denounced the Guru as a playboy, were to come to San Diego, they would not accept them. Since both the mother and the brother have up to now enjoyed a status in the movement something like sainthood, it wouldn't be an easy thing to do. But premies Carly and Richard take it philosophically. "Guru Maharaj Ji says obstacles are a part of life. All we can say is that he's given us knowledge. We can't make judgments about other people, because we don't know what their experience of knowledge has been."

Comments are likewise muted about local Marilyn Johnson, the blonde stewardess who received knowledge, and now as the Guru's wife, gives *satsang* herself. "I think she received knowledge in Los Angeles . . . Her parents, who live in Imperial Beach, well, they have come to see that she and Guru Maharaj Ji are very happy . . . No, the parents haven't received knowledge themselves yet, but they are seeking it. They come to some of our *satsang* meetings, and Guru Maharaj Ji comes to visit them in San Diego."

One of the happier anecdotes that Carly and Richard like to share is the conversation of Rennie Davis, formerly famous as one of the Chicago Seven. Rennie was on his way to Paris, where he was going to participate in the Vietnam war crime trials. He was flying Air India

and happened to meet an old friend who had also been involved in the anti-war movement. The friend had become a follower of Guru Maharaj Ji and was on his way to Prem Nagar to do *satsang* and service, and he offered to take Rennie with him. So Rennie went on to India and didn't go to the War Crime trials. Of course, since then, he gets some criticism at meetings. There are those who can't believe he would say not to pass judgment on others like President Nixon.

"But Rennie's a beautiful person. He's really beautiful." As to the question of forming religious communities, or ashrams, Richard and Carly don't see an immediate need for one in San Diego, though there are somewhere around 150 premies in town. The La Jolla ashram itself may not have been a real ashram, at least: the way ashrams are run nowadays. Now, to join an ashram, one must take almost monastic vows, pledging vegetarianism, chastity (one may have sex with a spouse), practice of *satsang* and service, and other rules. And a person might live a good life even without ashrams. The closest ashram to San Diego is the one in Los Angeles.

Right now, the San Diego followers meet about four times a week in different houses to do *satsang*, but currently *satsang* is suspended while premies are preparing for the upcoming visit of Mahatma Gurucharanand. This Mahatma, who's coming to Balboa Park on June 8, is the one who gave knowledge to Carly back in 1970 in Los Angeles, and is apparently one of the Guru's insiders (he was a follower of the Guru's father back in 1950).

"He's just beautiful," comments Carly. Whatever the direction of the San Diego premies, or whatever the external events, it does seem that the faith of mystical premies will be hard to shake. Probably one of the reasons is that premies don't even use the word faith. Either a person has knowledge, completely certain, or he doesn't.

## Still Beautiful



# events

May 29 - June 4, 1975

## MUSIC

**ELECTRO-ACOUSTIC MUSIC CONCERT**, including works by Herbert Brun, G. M. Koenig, and Curtis Roads. UCSD, Mandeville Center. Friday, May 30, 9 p.m. 452-3229.

**LA BOHEME**, the Puccini opera, presented by the City of Angels, a division of the Music Center opera association. Palomar Dome, San Marcos. Thursday, May 29, 8 p.m. and Greenmont College Student Hall. Friday, May 30, 8 p.m. 744-1150 (Palomar) and 465-1700 (Greenmont).

**ICE CREAM BAND CONCERT**, The Point Loma College Concert Band will serve music and ice cream. Point Loma College gymnasium. Friday, May 30, 7:30 p.m. 222-6474.

**LA JOLLA CIVIC/UNIVERSITY CHORUS CONCERT**, First Unitarian Church, Hillcrest. Sunday, June 1, 4 p.m. and First Presbyterian Church of San Diego. Sunday, June 2, 7:30 p.m. 452-3229.

**COMMUNITY CONCERT** performed by UCSD musicians. Southeast YMCA. Sunday, June 1, 3 p.m. 452-3229.

**YOUNG ARTIST OPERA THEATER**. Four mini operas by contemporary American composers. *Wespa's The Stronger*, Barber's *A Hand of Bridge*, Piazzi's *The Women*, and *Handicraft*. Telephone: UCSD, Mandeville Center. Monday and Wednesday, June 2 and 4, 8:30 p.m. 452-3229.

**MINI CONCERT**. Harpist Ann Seybold. Grano Salon. Civic Theatre. Monday, June 2, 12 noon and 12:30 p.m. 459-5678.

**NEW IMPROVISATIONS: JAZZ AND OTHERWISE**, featuring compositions by Jeff Pressing of the UCSD Music Department. UCSD, Mandeville Auditorium. Tuesday, June 3, 8:15 p.m. 452-3229.

**RAGTIME AND JAZZ CONCERT**, performed by the "Classical" Ragtime Company, Grossmont College. Fine Arts Recital Hall. Wednesday, June 4, 8 p.m. 465-1700. ext. 321.

**PERSPECTIVES WITHIN ONE**, a multi-dimensional sound and space performance directed by video artist and filmmaker Ed Emshwiller, presented by the Center for Music Experiment. UCSD, 408 Matthews Campus. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, June 4-6, 8 p.m. 452-4383.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**CHILDREN'S HEALTH CENTER FAIR**, Sports Arena. Saturday, May 31, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. 224-4176.

**ROTC DRILL AND INSPECTION COMPETITION**. San Diego County High School ROTC units compete for trophies. Mission Valley Center Hall. Saturday, May 31, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. 296-6376.

**8th ANNUAL RENAISSANCE SYMPOSIUM**. "Mexico and the Renaissance." UCSD, Mandeville Center. Friday, May 30, 8 p.m. and International Center. Saturday, May 31, 9:15 a.m. to 5 p.m. 452-3120.

**160th CONSECUTIVE CORPUS CHRISTI FIESTA**. Indian religious celebration. Mission San Antonio de Pala. Highway 76 near Mt. Palomar. Sunday, June 1, 9:30 a.m. 742-3300.

## SPORTS

**PRO VOLLEYBALL**. San Diego Breakers vs. El Paso Sol. Friday, May 30, 8 p.m. and Breakers vs. Santa Barbara. Sunday, June 1, 7 p.m. at the Sports Arena. 224-4176.

**43rd ANNUAL SAN DIEGO MEN'S AMATEUR GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP**. Balboa Park and Torrey Pines North and South Municipal Golf Courses. Saturdays and Sundays, May 31 - June 1, and June 7-8. 232-2470.

**WATER SKI TOURNAMENT**. Hidden Anchorage, Fiesta Island. Mission Bay Park. Sunday, June 1, 8 a.m. 276-0630.

## THEATRE

**TWIGS**, a comedy by George Furth. Coronado Playhouse. Fridays through Sundays, May 9 through June 21, 8:30 p.m. 435-4856.

**H.M.S. PINAFLORE**, by Gilbert and Sullivan. North County Community Theatre. Fridays and Saturdays, through May 31, 8 p.m. 726-8802.

**THE HOT L BALTIMORE**, by Lanford Wilson. Mission Playhouse. Old Town. Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, 8:30 p.m. 295-5453.

**THE DOCTOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF**, by Moliere. USIU, Zable Hall. Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, June 3, 4, and 7, at 8 a.m. and Thursday, June 5, at 5:30 and 8:10 p.m. 471-4300, ext. 209.



**THE OEDIPUS CARNAVAL AND RARE SHOW: A BURIAL IN THEBES**, an original production drawing characters from several Sophoclean tragedies. UCSD, Central University Library. Forum Level. Thursdays through Saturdays, May 22-24 and 29-31, 8 p.m. 452-3787.

**GODSPELL**, musical by John-Michael Tebelak. An "Step-by-Step" Schwartz based on parables of St. Matthew. Carle Centre Stage. Balboa Park. Tuesdays through Fridays, 8:30 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, 2 and 8:30 p.m. 238-2255.

**THE BEGGAR'S OPERA**, an 18th Century musical burlesque of Italian opera, by John Gay. S.D. State Recital Hall. Fridays and Saturdays, 8 p.m., and Sundays, 2 p.m., through June 15, 273-3221.

**READERS' THEATRE**. "The World of Shalom Aleichem." Mesa College Cafeteria. Friday, May 30, 8 p.m. 278-2200.

**FREE THEATRE IN THE SUN**. Comedy, Western melodrama, Shakespeare, and circus acts presented by Indian Magique Theatre. Zorro Gardens Amphitheatre. Balboa Park. Saturdays and Sundays, May 31, June 1, 7, and 8, from 12 noon to dusk. 235-0517.

**HERMAN AND THE COWARDLY CAT**, a children's play. Actors Quarter Theatre. Saturday, May 31, 2 p.m. 238-6909.

**SATURDAY'S WARRIORS**. Civic Theatre. Monday through Wednesday, June 2 through 4, 7:30 p.m. 236-6510.

**26th ANNUAL SAN DIEGO NATIONAL SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL**. *The Tempest*. Old Globe Theatre. Balboa Park. Tuesday, Wednesday, June 3 and 4, 8:30 p.m. 239-2255.

## GALLERIES

**PAINTING AND SCULPTURE** by UCSD undergraduates. Undergraduate Art Gallery, UCSD. HSS 1145, through June 4, 452-2860.

**CHICANO ART SHOW** and slide-lecture on Chicano art. Southwestern College. Student Union West. Friday, May 30, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Lecture at 11 a.m. 420-1331.

**JURIED MEMBERSHIP SHOW** plus a watercolor exhibit by Lawrence Brullo. San Diego Art Institute. Balboa Park. June 3 through 29, 234-5946.

**"DIAMONDS/TAPES"**, acrylics on paper by R. E. Simpson. "A Chromatic Synthesis," acrylics by Lois Stecker. "Batik Rock Art" by George Bornysek. Triforum Galleries, through May 31, 225-9569.

**JAPANESE SCREENS AND COSTUMES**, dated from the 15th through the 19th centuries. Fine Arts Gallery. Balboa Park. through June 15, 232-7931.

**STUD 'NT ART**: An all-media exhibition representing nearly 200 students from elementary and secondary San Diego City Schools. Fine Arts Gallery, Balboa Park. May 10 through June 15, 232-7931.

**CONTEMPORARY GRAPHICS**: Selections from the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, including works by Roy Lichtenstein, Frank Stella, Robert Rauschenberg, Ed Moses, Ed Ruscha. UCSD Mandeville Art Gallery, through June 6, 452-2864.

**PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINTS** by Southern California photographers at the My Eye Gallery, 6988 La Jolla Blvd. Suite G, La Jolla, California. 454-7223.

**RECENT ACQUISITIONS 1973-75**. La Jolla Contemporary Museum. May 24 through June 12, 454-0183.

**SCOTT MARTIN**, paintings. Gem Gallery. May 24 through June 7, 759-0315.

**ALL MEMBER EXHIBIT**, featuring Shirley Kalish, serigraphs; Norma McGee, paintings and drawings; Jeanne Otis, ceramics; Catherine Ruane, intaglio; Ruth Glick, paintings. Triad Gallery, May 20 through June 7, 299-5453.

**DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS** by John Roach, Artists Co-operative Gallery. May 20 through June 6, 296-0200.

**WATERCOLORS** by Calvin Fortbrook. Conis Gallery, Del Mar, through June 8.

**"CONTAIN YOURSELF"**, an all member craft exhibition. Many-Hands Gallery, through June 15, 583-0928.

## DANCE

**SAN DIEGO BALLET** and Natalie Makarova, former prima ballerina of the Kirov Ballet. Civic Theatre. Friday, May 30, 8 p.m. and Saturday, May 31, 2:30 and 8 p.m. 236-5510.

**MODERN DANCE**, concert presented by United States International University dancers. San Diego City College Theatre. Friday through Monday, May 30 through June 2, 8:30 p.m. 271-4300, ext. 209.

**SAN DIEGO BALLET**, Black Mountain School. Wednesday, June 4, 7 p.m. 748-0010, ext. 67.

The Events Page is compiled every week and is reproduced alternately by Southern California First National Bank and Bare Woods Furniture. Listings as well as drawings, photos, etc. should be sent to READER EVENTS, P.O. Box 80803, San Diego 92138 and should be received by the Saturday before the Thursday of publication.

**Southern California First National Bank**

**1ST National**

# Fahrenheit 45

Obviously it's a touchy subject even when the public shows small interest in it . . .

— Eleanor Widmer —

Playing the role of agent provocateur I leaned against the crowded bar of a restaurant one busy Saturday night and asked the young man next to me, "What do you think that letter A on the wall means?"

"I have enough of grades at the university," he replied with asperity, "and I couldn't care less." Then he turned his back, leaving me to count the cables in his handsome fisherman's sweater.

Undaunted, I made my way from restaurant to restaurant on Prospect Avenue in La Jolla, trying to determine where the health and safety code inspection letter was displayed, and if diners paid the slightest attention to it.

My research had not been confined to La Jolla — I look for the inspection letter in every restaurant I visit — but my mild public opinion poll seemed best conducted in an area dense with restaurants, where on a thriving night I would appear inconspicuous amidst the natives, the tourists, and a large contingent of Germans who had been deposited there as a part of a tour.

I would like to be able to report that I found even one person who looked for, or had any interest in, the inspection of restaurants conducted by the Department of Public Health for which this letter grade is awarded. But I did not. And when I interviewed the manager of a restaurant whose establishment had a B rating for 8 months, he reported no discernible fall-off in business.

To what does the California Restaurant Act address itself, and how does it affect the diner? The Department of Sanitation employs 58-60 men and women who inspect the facilities of restaurants. More accurately, they pass judgment on the equipment and methods employed in restaurants, but not on the quality of the food itself.

Under equipment, 16 items are listed, including the condition of floors, walls and ceilings, refrigerators, hoods and vents, steam tables, drain boards, sinks, garbage disposal, rat proofing and toilet and washroom facilities. And under methods, the steam tables must be kept at 140 degrees Fahrenheit, no uncolored insecticide or raticide may be used, and all readily perishable foods must be stored at 45 degrees, including cream filled pastries, custards, milk, meats. But the quality or the preparation of these foods does not come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Public Health, or of any public department.

Therefore, when a restaurant receives an A rating, it tells you only how the physical plant is maintained, including the storage of food. And even this A is unstable because a month after inspection, an infestation of roaches may go unheeded, or the grill may build up too much grease that you are eating rancid fare through your hamburger.

A score of 89½ will earn any restaurant an A, and while each place should be inspected several times a year, the period between inspections may permit unsanitary conditions to exist unchecked. The same form of instability applies to food handlers who must secure registration cards issued by Public Health and based on physical examinations. These exams eliminate people with syphilis, tuberculosis, typhoid, severe rashes, open lesions, etc. But once the food handler obtains the card, it is subject to review only if an inspector sees a food handler in a restaurant with a visible ooze sore or a marked visible abrasion in health. It boggles the mind to imagine a food handler who contracts a venereal disease and who does not have it treated immediately for fear of losing his or her card.

When the inspector checks out a restaurant, the personnel should pass in terms of clean uniforms, clean hands, nails, absence of skin infections. Yet establishments that open at 5 p.m. are visited during the day while the place remains officially closed and the full complement of help is not on hand.

But fear not! The officials at the Public Health center are well aware of the limitations of the Food Handler's Health and Safety Code. No one can deny that stricter regulations would aid the public. For the food handler, whose poor health may stem from a deprived socio-economic background that would deteriorate further with loss of job, a more stringent code looms as a nemesis.

So what's the consumer, or diner to do? My own feeling is that he should report to the manager a waiter or waitress or food handler with bad acne or cuts. And if you suffer from food poisoning, you should phone the Department of Public Health. Recently, I asked for an inspection of a hamburger establishment with an A rating because someone in my party saw a rat in the bathroom, and the hamburger bun was as thick with grease as with alleged meat. The sanitation inspector can do nothing about the quality of the meat, but if the grill has not been adequately cleaned, or if rodents are nesting near the food, that can be corrected.

It will interest you to know that I made 14 phone calls to various restaurants in town. Those with B or C ratings hung up on me — who the hell was I, a pig? Those with A ratings, and also wouldn't give me the time of day. Obviously, it's a touchy subject, even when the public manifests small interest in it.

The manager of a once B rated restaurant did speak to me about why he had obtained that score. His pizza and Italian food restaurant is housed in a building more than 50 years old. Many of his violations came from the fact that no renovations had been made since the original restaurant had been opened when the code was different. For example, the restaurant code demands that you go through an ante-room door, or outer door before you enter the door of the rest room itself. He flunked on that one. When the ante-room door was installed it had to be self-closing. This cut down on the ventilation. More minus points. From the point of view of the manager, Greg Lawrence, the B rating did not apply to the quality of the food. He did admit that his place had been scruffy, and that the minus points for lack of cleanliness in storage shelves, the greasiness of the walls, did deserve criticism. He was also faulted because a crack had developed in the formica counter — a possible breeding place for bacteria and vermin. But he felt that losing points for carbon build-up on the bottom of his pizza pans was excessive. He did agree that a layer of dough on the outside of the dough pan could easily be remedied, though it did not affect the inside of the pan, which was cleaned.

Did the B rating, prominently displayed in the window, cut down business? Not that he noticed, he replied. Strangely, no one asked him about it either.

This place now has an A rating. The counter tops have been replaced with stainless steel, the kitchen walls washed, the carbon eliminated from the bottom of the pizza pans, the cupboards scrubbed, and the dining room itself repainted. When I asked why the kitchen had not been repainted, he answered that it now passed the regulations.

If any of you have read George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris*

and London, you will remember that our American niceties about sanitation did not apply to the poorest European restaurants, which were veritable sink holes. Some curiosities of the California Restaurant Code may amuse you:

No food or beverage prepared in a private home shall be used in the preparation of foods or beverages offered for sale, sold, or given away by an itinerant restaurateur.

No couch, cot or bed, or other sleeping accommodation shall be maintained or kept in any room where food is prepared, stored, or served.

Birds are permitted in eating establishments provided they are completely encased in glass on the sides of the enclosure housing them where utensils or food are stored, prepared, served.

No person shall bring any dog, cat, fowl, or other live animal, nor shall the owner, operator or the establishment permit a dog, cat, fowl or other live animal to be brought into or to remain in any food handling establishment. This section does not apply to dogs trained to guide the blind . . .

In the meantime, if you become ill and suspect that your pastry, custard or meat has not been kept at 45 degrees Fahrenheit, call your doctor. You have legal redress if food poisoning has been verified. If you are not litigious but just sick of it all, call the Department of Public Health, 236-2243.

To end on a cheery note (Jonathan Saville's favorite phrase for hope in a sometimes desolate universe), very few establishments fail to comply with the sanitation code and we manage to survive those food handlers who carry bugs in infection. However, C is not a good grade anywhere, and should you find it posted in some off-beat restaurant that may suggest or recreate for you a European or Asian experience, have the common sense to know that you enter at your own risk.

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Lemon Tree Corner 11th and Camino Del Mar



—Tina H. Kafka—

When an archeologist uncovers an intact piece of pottery from an ancient ruin, his discovery can mean a spectacular insight into the mystery of a bygone civilization. None of the items exhibited last month in a far corner of San Diego State University had been buried under weightier loads than piles of old clothing in grand-mother's attic, but the insight they allowed into the spirit of early Americans was no less rewarding or spectacular.

The exhibit was entitled "Of the People, By the People, and For the People — Early American Folk Art." In some senses, it tied in well with the current craze for nostalgia and the popularity of anything old and homemade. But the exhibit was more than a testament to nostalgia. It was the first public activity of a new organization which celebrates the human spirit in a finely crafted chair, or well worn carpentry tools made by and for the hands that used them. The organization is Mingei International and its prime mover is Martha Longenecker, a potter and professor at San Diego State University.

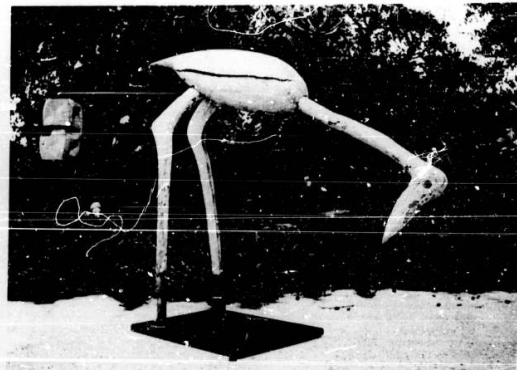
Mingei International is dedicated to the preservation, collection, and documentation of folk art of all cultures. Mrs. Longenecker is looking for people who own folk art and who are willing to share their collections by lending them to Mingei International for exhibition. The collections do not need to be extensive or complete.

Last month's exhibit included a diverse selection of early American. Two small models of kitchen furniture which were carried through the countryside by horse and wagon to various orders for rural life-size versions gave an interesting glimpse into early American traveling salesmanship. An extensive collection of 19th century bird decoys which included a large, expressive blue heron carved from wood was especially notable. There were quilts, cross-stitch samplers, coin silver dentist spoons, a pewter whisk trimmer. High cholesterol may be a common concern today, but early Americans were devoted to its consumption — churns, butter molds, and butter spoons were simply on display to prove it.

Even those who scoff at expressions of patriotism and consider the coming Bicentennial an annoyance, could not help but be awed at the original handmade thirteen star flag. It was, fittingly, mounted above a set of hand-wrought iron eagle which once perched at a roof's edge to hold back the snow.

The exhibit occupied the Fine Arts Gallery and while we were there, the gallery was shared with a seminar of student teachers earnestly engaged in a discussion having nothing to do with folk art. As we marvelled at the craftsmanship and finely wrought beauty around us, comments like, "I had to take the paper away from him and tell him that that has no place in an art class," filtered in and out of our consciousness. Mrs. Longenecker said

## Keep an Eye on those Garage Sales!



No one saved a child's rocking chair or a set of tin cookie cutters because they were speculating.

that eventually she plans to have a permanent Mingei Center. "These objects speak for themselves," she said, "they are a time capsule which tells so much about people and their cultures."

After meeting Mrs. Longenecker, whose energy and passion for Mingei International and folk art are contagious, one has no doubt that the Center will be established. Folk art and discussions of classroom discipline will forever remain separate. Meanwhile, Mrs. Longenecker is not about to let the lack of ideal facilities stand in her way. Mingei International, incorporated only last December, has sponsored the visit of and Soanad Robertson from England, author of *Craft and Contemporary Culture* and *19th Century Pottery*. She gave a talk on "Myth and Symbolism in Art," and led a seminar of San Diego County teachers on natural dying from plants.

Haku Shah, the director of the tribal arts program in Ahmedabad, East India, will be in San Diego later this year. And more exhibits of the people, by the people, and for the people of many different cultures are planned for the future.

The name Mingei International is

first seems inappropriate for an organization based in San Diego. Mingei is a Japanese term which means "art of the people." The word was coined by Dr. Soetsu Yanagi who realized in the 1920's that as Japan became more industrialized, its tradition of hand making beautiful objects for everyday use would be threatened. Handmade were to be discarded by people anxious to progress technologically and modernize. So in 1931, Yanagi and two poets, Kanjo Kavei, and Soji Hamada founded the Japanese Folk Arts Society (Nihon Mingei Kyokai) which actively sponsors exhibits and lectures, and publishes books and magazines on the folk arts of Japan.

In 1962, Mrs. Longenecker traveled to Japan and was invited to consider the foremost folk potter of Japan. She stayed for three and a half months. During that period, she said, she realized the need for an organization in this country similar to the Folk Arts Society in Japan. Mingei International is not formally affiliated with Nihon Mingei Kyokai, but was inspired by and is related philosophically to Japan's movement. Mrs. Longenecker explained.

"People make folk art because a hand object is an embodiment of life. People take pleasure in using a wonderful butter spoon or sitting in a special chair," Mrs. Longenecker said. It is that intangible vitality and spirit which characterizes folk art and the folk craftsman, a spirit which is just as available to the craftsman in San Diego as it is to the dulcimer maker in the mountains of Kentucky. That is the message Mrs. Longenecker hopes Mingei International will spread. "I want Mingei to make people aware of the richness and the tremendous potential of all people to make simple objects of unsurpassable beauty which relate to their daily lives."

Some might argue that to use a word like "folk" to refer to anything contemporary or freely to interchange the words "art" and "craft" is sloppy technique. Some would feel demeaned if their work was dubbed "craft" as if this implied it was vulgar and robbed it of a certain aesthetic quality. The term "folk" is especially touchy. Anything that is part of the folk tradition should be old, and its origin obscure, we have been told. But that would exclude the contemporary urban craftsman or musician, for that matter, from the folk. It's much more practical to change the definition, in the finest folk custom, to suit the needs of the day. Pete Seeger, in the notes to his album "We Shall Overcome" put it this way:

"Some people make a big thing out of arguing whether these are folk songs or not. Myself, I don't believe it important, unless you are a professional musicologist whose business it is defining such words. The best songs will be remembered, and passed on from one singer to another, and a hundred years from now some professor can come along and collect them. He can call them folk songs then, if he wants to."

The exhibit last month was filled with objects that would not have been called folk art a hundred years ago. No one saved a handwoven corset, a child's rocking chair, or a set of tin cookie cutters because they were speculating in folk art like people do in real estate. Some were saved for sentimental reasons, but it's just as likely that many were spared from the Goodwill because no one ever got around to cleaning out the attic. Now we gaze with awe at the care and craftsmanship that went into the most common kitchen utensil, and call it folk art, and collect it, and remember with dismay that our parents had one just like it, and why on earth did they throw it away when we moved.

The folk in folk art of today or a hundred years ago, represent the same intimate communion between the craftsman and his material, the same integrity of design and function in the finished product, and the same pride and joy in the craft. Craftsman today won't make the same things that were made long ago, but they can work with the same essential vitality. That vitality is the tradition which Mingei International honors and preserves.

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—Leslie Kienholz—

Although art for enrichment is a halfhearted phrase, only art that changes personalities is worth being called great. One preceptive benefit of the fading fast photorealists was the opportunity to appreciate the oppressive sunlight of Southern California, in paintings by Robert Bechtle and David Hockney nor example, and the deadening effect it has on our brains. Now even the regionalist blood like the leisurely defiance of the white surfer crash toward New York, grain, was, the streamer iron grip of Chamberlich-tenrauchenhol, the Abstract Expressionist tradition which made New York the center of the art world, and most self-destructive, an history. Regionalist uprisings never last out here because New York is still supremely capable of training young artists who eventually snuff the scene away from the muscle-brained West. But I'll look closely at what one rising New York artist, Yvonne Rainer, has to offer, it's the same "I'll make it to the top" attitude I know and love. If I consider a change of personality, I love the West's intractable "make me" attitude, as well.

The insistent even for this article was picking up at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, a copy of *Sunshine Muse*. Peter Plagens' stare through the brain-blasted sunlight at West Coast art history. Los Angeles' places are potent for art — full of rotting romance. It's the real underlying rotteness of L.A. that makes a cryptic artist like Ed Ruscha so good. This environment has a great deal of effect on its art as all environments do, but especially when they have a mystique that combines with the actual appearance and creates an effect like Frankenstein's monster — strong armor and awful kick. The L.A. County Museum doesn't have much of a mystique; it is simply a cement block on the tar pits, like Monaco on the Mediterranean. But there was enough there for Ed Ruscha, who made a painting of the museum on fire, which was the same earnest as that place.

At that time, when I found the book in the museum, I was looking for some information on a David Hockney print show at an unknown La Cienega gallery. Later, reading *Sunshine Muse*, I skimmed the parts on Abstract Expressionism in San Francisco, the Oriental influence on the Northwest, to read the parts on Los Angeles. La Cienega Boulevard. Apparently the greatest period for Los Angeles art was started in the late

Fifties by Ed Kienholz, Walter Hoppa, and Irving Blum, who were working together at the Ferus Gallery with Billy Al Bengtson (who is now doing dark irises). Ed Moses, Craig Kaufman, and others. Their art is all the other galleries around La Cienega Boulevard were booming by 1965. Kienholz's art was a proving ground case for regionalist art. His brutal tableaux, barren and warehouse, became an international art taste, but were never popular in New York. Kienholz was too deadly serious about

his gutsy morality. I don't think L.A.'s potential to live separate from New York died with that period. I hope it only went under cover. When I saw a Cienega after the museum, it was like a ghost town with a cold stinking breeze blowing right up the street. The galleries were tight and had trimmings like potted plants and awnings. I dream a great gallery would be a large warehouse with a sky-high roof, a few paintings hung eye-level with "I like Francis Bacon" scrawled on them; not these little

flower cans! Anything Peter Plagens writes is must reading. I guess he is the finest art critic on the West Coast. *Sunshine Muse* is the first book on the modern art history of the West, and Plagens' first book — he's not usually a historian. What's good about Plagens is he has for his writing the same great chance of being quite subtle under cover that is a large warehouse with a sky-high roof, a few paintings hung eye-level with "I like Francis Bacon" scrawled on them; not these little

## White Surfer Trash



Los Angeles' places are potent for art — full of rotting romance.

dirty and scary New York is to a self-proclaimed bourgeois like him. He finds a cover of the tone of petri irritation in that article, where it is "not quite himself" and he's "tired, are just let slip out some of the most, nearest, most clear-eyed perceptions on the New York art scene."

Plagens' mood in *Sunshine Muse* is different though. It's disappointing that he doesn't take the stand that he is above all this and get crabby a lot of West art he includes in the book is so so-so. I think he wanted to defeat self-indulgence — the main line of West Coast art — and goes about that by doggedly uncompromising plowing into types we forgot existed. He beats down the "aw, I just do it for fun" attitude, then forces the material into a historical and responsible context, putting it in the same society as the many books on New York art. He has to fight back doubts that this is the way to handle it, while yelling at the happy surfer to shape up. Since Plagens forced his way through, the least you can do is read it, and be assured the small insights are going to be very good. I've tried to read it twice, skipping and skimming to the parts I like and the artist I know.

What makes some art seem fabulous, separating it from just the good, converting the neutral observer to an idol of appreciation, is a pure of romanticism of the same kind that still rumbles the hearts of millions whose hope to be discovered in Los Angeles died out with Hollywood — the Great White Way of the American Dream. Only when there is a personality change in the art world, away from encouraging the habit of mythologizing the artist, will any skeptical questions be raised about the aesthetic mystique of homosexuality, or being a female artist, or being a New York artist. The first thing you have to try to remember is what everybody forgets, when they start getting mad about an art personality — that an attitude towards a personality in a style which could change any minute. Artists know they can at present comment on romantic attitudes and use them as attractive subject matter at the same time, thereby soliciting the romantic attitude for themselves and their work. The best artist, however, detach their own personalities spectacularly from romanticism: Ed Ruscha by imposing a relief of heavenly though cryptic neutrality on pictures of insane Los Angeles environments and places. David Hockney by making his homosexual paintings exclusively tender.

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(continued from page 11)

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