

Other Scenes

John Wilcock

1968

By the time the narcotics squad pinpointed him last month, Dick Swafford, 28, had probably stashed two or three hundred thousand dollars away in Swiss banks. Once a week he'd leave his home in L.A. and drive to San Diego to meet the incoming grass supply from Mexico. After a bit of business in California he'd fly across country, sometimes stopping at Chicago long enough to stuff a suitcase full of shit into a parcel locker (leaving the key to the locker for his contact there to pick up later in the day).

On the train up to Montreal he'd travel dressed as a clergyman in one compartment (an STP sticker inside his coat) while two suitcases containing 22 keys each sat on the rack in the compartment next door.

Once in New York, he'd hole up in a shabby Murray Hill hotel for 24 hours, make a dozen phone calls and deal calmly with all comers. On that day if you walked along the block to the hotel you'd see an unmistakable succession of heads coming and going with brown paper bags in their hands, bulging attache cases under their arms. And if you knew Dick was in town you'd always know where they'd been.

Dick had been making this fortnightly run for almost five years and by now he had the best of everything—an apartment in each major city, a car, a bird. In his way he was even a bit of a philanthropist laying a free key now and again on a rock group that took his fancy, investing in a poetry magazine or a newly-opened macrobiotic restaurant. He'd quit the business once but life seemed too quiet without it.

But then, last month, when Dick was resting up in his L.A. pad before setting off across country, the Feds and Treasury agents both followed up on a tip and broke in literally. Before the door was down at his West Hollywood apartment on N. Westernmont, Dick had grabbed a gun and shot himself. The 180 grass bricks, neatly wrapped in blue paper, were confiscated as was the \$40,000 in cash lying on the table. (To settle unpaid "Marijuana taxes," the Treasury guys laconically explained.) As for the money deposited in Swiss banks—only Dick knew the account numbers, and he's dead.

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Every period of history has proved positively that professional politicians are the worst possible people to hold office and make irrelevant rules for the rest of us. (If you don't believe this, study how these same men behave in their own greedy lives.) A country that totally barred from office anybody who had already served once and, instead, elected people who had proven ability in some creative—rather than managerial field—would be an infinitely less uptight place to live...

"I've met Abe Fortas and I can assure you that it is possible to dislike him purely for himself without even raising the Jewish question" (Mort Sahl). The London sex magazine, *Forum*, (by subscription only from 170 Ifield Road, London S.W. 10) is conducting a survey on the actual length of the erect penis and asks readers to send in their statistics. Scarcely out of a Greek jail (after a four-year term for pot), writer-traveler Neal Phillips got busted in Italy and now sits in Rome's Carcere Regina Coeli ("prison of the sky queen") awaiting sentence there...

"It's shocking, but some universities are beginning to allow unmarried men and women to sleep together in college dormitories," says a quote from a subscription letter touting a California mag called "The Plain Truth." (Instead of being shocked it should list the colleges for the benefit of all...

Although *Other Scenes* remains unlisted therein, Len Fulton's *Directory of Little Magazines & Small Presses* (\$2 from Box 123, El Cerrito, Calif. 94530) is an invaluable compendium...

"People don't realise it but we have the highest kill ratio per dollar spent of any unit in Vietnam"—Lt. John Ray of Moultrie, Ga., quoted in the NY Times. If the statement proves anything (apart from the fact that Ray's a stupid motherfucker) it's only that murder has the same proportion of cut-price blacklegs as any other job...

"The hypocrites in the White House, and the great cathedrals...pretend that violence has two faces: a bad face when it's done to them, a good face when it's done to the guy across the tracks...if that Arab (Sirhan) had used that pistol to kill Ho Chi Minh he would be decorated by the White House and given a million-dollar movie contract" (Number One magazine).

Pop group the Fifth Dimension is suing TWA because they allegedly "imitated" their voices in the "Up, Up & Away" commercial. Imitation used to be classed as flattery, now it just motivates greed. Most black radio stations are "just more white power, and they sound like it" says Paul Williams in current *Crawdaddy*. Black kids, kept ignorant of Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, John Coltrane, "never had a chance to hear their own music," he alleges.

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