

F.E. Weirdo Meets 'Right-eous' J.J.

David Gaynes

1969

As any kid who plays sandlot baseball will tell you, the kid who owns the ball owns the game. It's true.

J.J. Scott, of radio station WTAK ("1090 on your AM dial"), is still back there somewhere on that sandlot, and lets no one forget just whose game it really is.

I ran into him a week or two ago rather unexpectedly. I was downtown near Hudson's selling *Fifth Estates* when I passed the WTAK trailer in the middle of the Kern block. Just for a goof, I tapped on the soundproof plexiglass front window, smiled my most fetching stoned-hippie type smile, and pointed to the stack of papers I was carrying.

J.J. looked up, interrupted his discussion of some esoteric snake-oil long enough for me to observe all thirty-two of his gleaming white teeth and the fluorescent highlights of his Brylcreemed hair, mouthed something I couldn't hear through the window, and resumed talking to his public—whoever they are.

I tapped on the window again, to which he replied by dramatically gesturing that I should come in through the door in the back, which I did.

There wasn't much inside other than the man himself, another chair and a few blue knobs and dials. The dials were fun to watch as they skittered across their jeweled-movement arcs with every resonance of his rich, saccharine voice.

As Scott concluded some vacuous phone-call with a retired social-security number, I ran through a few of the interesting possibilities which the situation had to offer.

The two of us were obviously alone, and I knew that it wouldn't take much doing to seize the airwaves for a sweet, brief time. A mere flick of my wrist could have done ten minutes worth of damage to his immaculate coiffure. During the time he would have been obliged to repair his image I could have spread the truth about imperialist, racist amerika to all those within the range of my voice.

Remembering that a Detroit Police mobile recruiting booth was twenty feet from my left elbow quickly halted my grandiose plans.

"We have in our studios today, right here, a representative from Detroit's Fifth Estate newspaper."

In a flash of inspired thinking, I deduced by process of elimination that it was indeed me he was talking about, and I proceeded to limber up my speaking voice as unobtrusively as possible for my first radio appearance.

With a broad "show-biz" type wink, J.J. asked me if I had any "four-letter words today" for the radio audience. As I opened my mouth to reply to his asinine question in as un-scatological a manner as possible, he clamped his manicured hand on my knee in a manner that needed no explanation. I guess even J.J. can't fuck with the F.C.C.

"Let's look at the new issue," he intoned, Ding-Dong School style, as he deftly palmed a copy from my lap.

I can't do justice to what followed. J.J. read off a few of the headlines and described some of the choicer pictures, making it obvious by his coy manner that he was sparing his listeners some unendurable shock to their feeble systems by skirting the true, unmentionable contents of this, this "rag" as he called it.

It was a magnificent performance, one which could have only been brought off as well as it was by someone who really believes that sex is only okay if you feel guilty afterwards, and that all your average hippie needs is a good haircut.

I'm sure his loyal fans ate it up. (Slurp...slurp.)

Through all this I suffered in silence. He had the microphone and he wasn't about to give it up.

He finally talked to me, if only long enough to ask me how long it took me to get my hair "that way." I replied that it took me about since the last time I got it cut, a remark which he puzzled over for a moment before magnanimously announcing that in spite of the fact that the paper was a worthless, godless smut-sheet, he'd buy a copy anyway. He even let me keep the nickel out of the quarter he gave me.

As I was leaving, I heard him wrap up our little visit for the folks..."there you have it, another confrontation with the new left, and a typically inarticulate spokesman..."

No comment.

The rest of the afternoon, I hatched and discarded a number of nefarious plans. At one point I was primed to pull the cinder blocks out from under the trailer hitch and roll the whole damned thing into the middle of Woodward. I also considered the alternative of rolling the trailer down Woodward to the river and dumping it in. I wonder what Hotlips Scott would have sounded like underwater.

Of course, I wound up doing none of this. I did, however, lay down a gargantuan, basso profundo fart in front of the trailer on my way home—and if J.J. Scott considers his babbling articulate, I'd have to modestly admit that my parting message was truly eloquent.

fifth Estate

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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/92-november-13-26-1969/f-e-weirido-meets-right-eous-j-j>
Fifth Estate #92, November 13-26, 1969

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