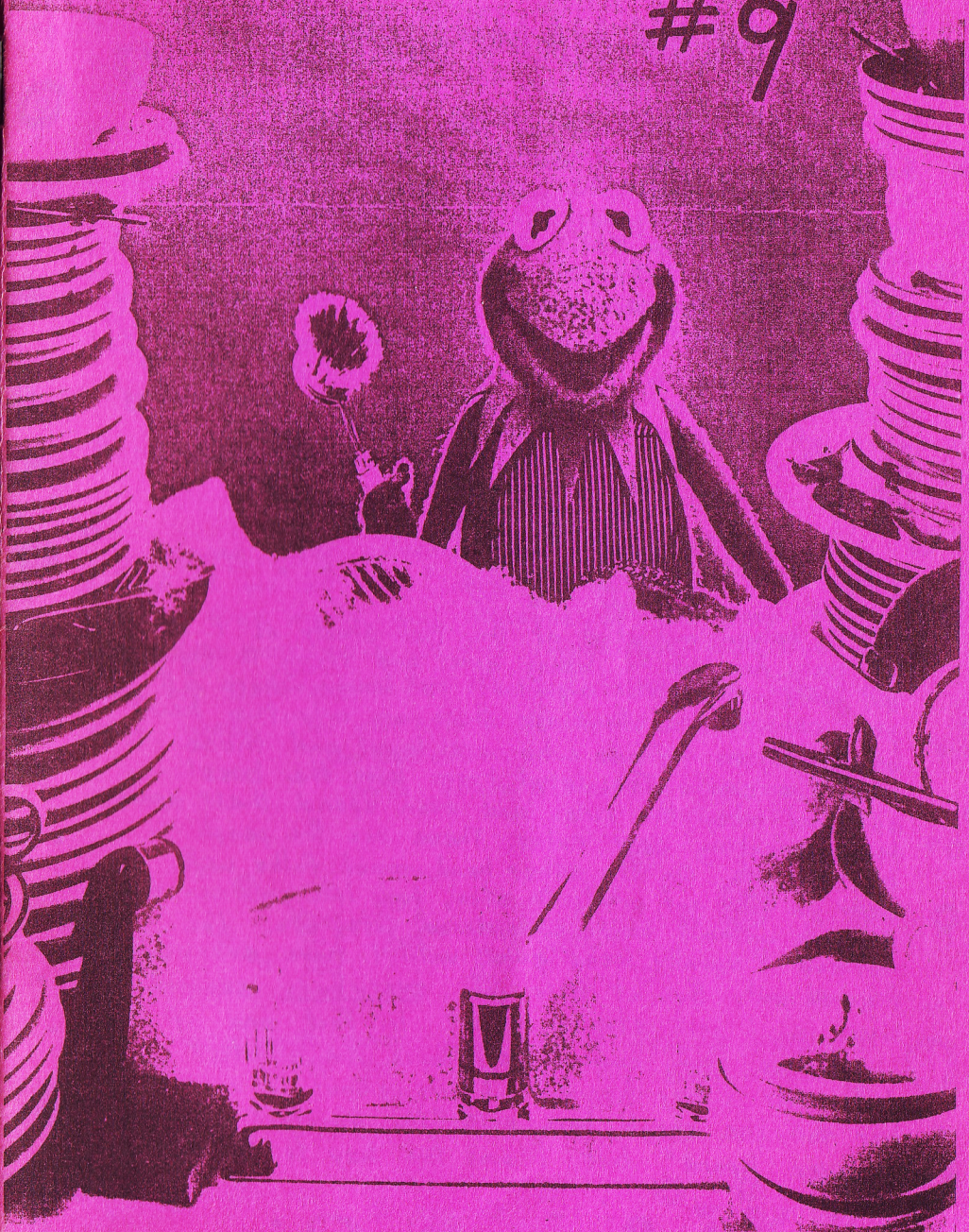


dishwasher

#9



my swell time IN NEW HAM'SHA (NEW HAMPSHIRE)

As soon as I arrived in New Hampshire, I began the search for a job. I didn't want a job, but I did need the money. So the search went without enthusiasm. Weeks later, I wandered into the creepily-named place - "The Fish Shanty" - handed the old man my sheet o' paper cheezily introducing me as a "DISHWASHER FOR ALL YOUR NEEDS." He asked "You a dishwasher?" and I said "Yeah" and he said "Awright, come in Friday night and I'll put you to work." And thus I was accepted into the dishwashing world of the "LIVE FREE OR DIE" state (which is also the only state that doesn't have a permanently official Martin Luther King holiday).



I began my stint at the Fish Shanty as I do at every new job - being quiet and trying to figure out who's who. It's important to know where all your co-workers stand for there are only two kinds of employees - those who are loyal and those who are cool. The loyal types kiss the boss' ass and obey the rules and even spend their spare time creating new rules. These are the people to be wary of. On the other hand, cool folks will show ya how and what to steal, how late you can come to work without being considered late, etc. I've noticed I usually keep quiet until I have everybody figured out. But at this job, everybody seemed loyal, so I just stayed quiet. In fact, one of the waitresses even commented, "You're the quietest dishwasher I ever heard!" I was about to correct her for she should have said "the quietest dishwasher I never heard" but I was too lazy to tell her so.

Another one of the waitresses there asked if my dishwashing was just a prelude to becoming a cook. I was deeply offended. Why is there this assumption that dishwashers are the bottom rung of some sort of career-climbing ladder? I'm proud to wash dishes. I'm proud to work in a profession where you have no responsibilities, where quitting and gaining a job are literally everyday happenings, where no one has any expectations of you. And yes, I have seen the tragedy of other dishwashers chasing the carrot up this phantom ladder and I know where it leads to. Take, for example, Seattle's finest dishdog Dave — he's recently tried to pretend he's a bus boy but has already been fired from two such positions for "being too slow." Yet no one ever complained about his slovenly pace when he washed dishes....



Anyway, one advantage of dishwashing was denied to me at this job — free food. They didn't provide free meals and, because of ~~the way~~ the way things were set-up, it was impossible for me to snag any secret eats. As the Ed's Redeeming Qualities song goes:

You can burn to death on a boat,
You can drown in a shot of whiskey,
You're gonna starve working for that
restaurant...."



I was paid every week in a strange ritualistic manner. I'd go to the restaurant, the boss would see me and know I was there to pick up my under-the-table pay. He'd go first to the cash register

and count out some cash, then motion me to follow him into the corner, checking to make sure no one was watching us. Of course no one was watching us because this was the early afternoon and there were no customers around to give a crap about what we were doing. Nevertheless, he'd continue to glance about until he was satisfied the scene was secure. Then he'd quickly ram his fist into my hand and clench my hand around the rolled-up wad of fives and ones. I'd slyly move my hand towards my pocket, acting as if my hand held nothing (because by then, with all the secrecy involved, I'd begin to believe we were actually partaking in something which no one should have witnessed). It was when my fist reached my pocket that I'd remember his way way of showing his appreciation. Out of the corner of my eye I'd see it coming and I'd flash back to the previous weeks' experiences of his appreciation. He'd say "good work" and send his hand at me to do a good-natured-old-Italian-guy slap on my cheek yet he never did it right. It was always a clumsy move on his part as the side of hand or his wrist (body parts which have no right being involved in a good-natured slap) would box my ear or nail my temple. There was just no way of ducking this kind-hearted motion. After it would happen, I'd be kinda dazed and he'd be smiling at me. I'd walk outside and count my wad to make sure he didn't try to rip me off. [I enjoy working under the table because of the conspiracy between employee and employer to cheat the government. The fucked part of it is the employee has minimal rights, especially concerning wages.] So this

scene repeated each week until finally, one week, when he was about to pay me, he asked, "How much do I pay you? \$4.50 an hour? ... uh... no, I mean \$4.25 an hour?" He was such a bad actor, it was pathetic. He'd been paying me five bucks an hour all along and then all of a sudden tried to pretend it was \$4.25. I told him, "No, it's \$5 an hour" and he acted surprised, responding "Really?" He paid me what he owed me though he made it seem as if I were trying to burn him. Funny guy.



The following week, my night to work arrived and I was just too lazy to go. This job was only one night a week, and lasted for only four hours, yet I still moaned, "Geez, I have to work tonight, my whole day is shot!" So I stayed at home and assumed they would assume my lack of presence meant I quit since that's what I assumed. And it felt good. Jobs are for quitting. You get a job, do it for a spell, then quit and it feels good. These are my "values" which I used to think differed from my dad's but I don't think so anymore. He had been working at the same job for 30 years, but then, just recently, while at work, he began clearing off his desk. His co-workers asked what was up and he said he was going home. His boss came over and asked "You mean you're leaving at the end of the day?" and my dad

said "No" and the boss asked "You're going home at lunch?" and my dad said "No, I'm leaving right now." When the boss told him to stick around because they wanted to give him a company party in his honor, my dad told 'em to keep their party and he left. Apparently, he'd been periodically cleaning out his desk in preparation for the day when he'd finally want to leave, so then he wouldn't have as much stuff to carry home. I thought it was a great act and he seemed to have really enjoyed the feeling. I enjoy the feeling also, which is why I always find new jobs, so I can quit them.



After my farewell to the Frsh Shanty, I received a call for an interview from a restaurant I had applied at. On my way to the interview, I speculated what it would be like to not be hired after enduring an interview. Most interviews for dishwashing jobs are somewhat like this: "You want the job? You got it..." Well, when I arrived, I knew I wouldn't get the job because the interviewer introduced herself as the "chef." Places that employ cooks who refer to themselves as chefs usually want dishwashers who don't have eternally scruffy faces, who are willing to wear clean white shirts, and who don't have pink hair. Obviously I didn't qualify, so I stayed joyfully unemployed for awhile longer.



One day, while eating at the local favorite eatery, I watched their dishwasher in action. Somehow she didn't fit the picture of a dishwasher, didn't

fulfill the role. But when I heard her yell "WENCH!" and then storm out of the place, I realized she was a magnificent dishwashing specimen. Her glorious moment quickly turned into my opportunity. Since the place was packed (and a line of customers were waiting outside), I knew there was an immediate need to fill the new opening. I jumped at the chance and wandered into the kitchen to find the boss-type washing the dishes. Naturally it was a pleasurable sight and I could have just kept quiet and watched him sweat it out, but by this time, I did need a job. I told him I was an available dishwasher and he gave me a look of distrust. But he knew he didn't have many options and I was hired. I went from customer to employee within two minutes.



It was a keen little place. The dining area had space for only a few small tables and a counter and the kitchen was even smaller. Despite the size, it was a busy operation. The first thing I noticed about my male co-workers was they all wore t-shirts with the logos of cigarette or beer brands on them. Occasionally, they'd discuss where they picked up specific shirts or how rare a certain shirt was. Very scary. These guys (the cooks) were also in control of the radio which meant a continuation of the cook/classic rock connection. Jeezus, I hadn't heard that much Lynyrd Skynyrd since I was 12 years old. But I did love how the classic rock station would boldly proclaim to be "not afraid of the 90's" and then try to

prove it by playing an updated version of some old classic rock hit by some old classic rock geezer. The requirement to dig crappy rock seems to be a major factor why I'd never want to be a cook.



This job's duties went beyond your basic dishwashing because it included a tad bit of bussing. All these years I've gotten by without ever doing any bussing. I hate the chore because I hate dealing with customers. I'm not good at pretending to be cheerful to people who I couldn't give a shit about. Sometimes I'd be bussing a table and a customer would sit down and say something happy and shallow like "nice day today, isn't it?" I'd be tempted to respond "What do ya mean, nice day? - I'm working!" but instead I'd not say anything or even look at them and just walk away. I would never make it as a waiter or in any job where you're paid to suck up to strangers.



The best part of this job was I was able (and even encouraged) to eat anything and everything I wanted. I worked my shifts with a strategy to eat as much as possible so I wouldn't be hungry again til I worked the following day. This is what I ate one day at work:

garlic bagel w/ cream cheese
bowl of cereal
bowl of fruit
barianna
blueberry muffin
pineapple-walnut muffin

strawberry pancakes
cheesecake
2 brownie sundaes
plain bagel w/ c.c.
swiss + tomato sandwich
french fries

apple juice
orange "
cranberry "
grape "
milk

plus random handfuls of blueberries, walnuts, chocolate chips, chopped bell pepper, broccoli, and hunk o' cheese

You wouldn't think a skinny guy like me could eat much (and I don't usually) but something just happens when I'm around free food - I develop an enormous appetite.



Most of the food was good although once they baked a banana nut bread which contained unidentifiable pinkish meaty little bits of matter. I never asked what it was because I honestly didn't want to know. They also served what they called chop suey though it was just macaroni and ground beef, a dish known as "western mac" or "ground beef mac" on the back of any box of mac + cheese. But I was told it's called chop suey in New Hampshire. Other New Hampshire oddities I experienced:

frappes - they are supposed to be like milkshakes. In fact, some ice cream shops serve both frappes and milkshakes but one is just milk and flavored syrup and the other is your regular thick ice creamy drink. But I never figured out which was which and nobody was able to straighten it out for me. Each time I ordered a frappe or a milkshake, they always turned out to be merely flavored milk.

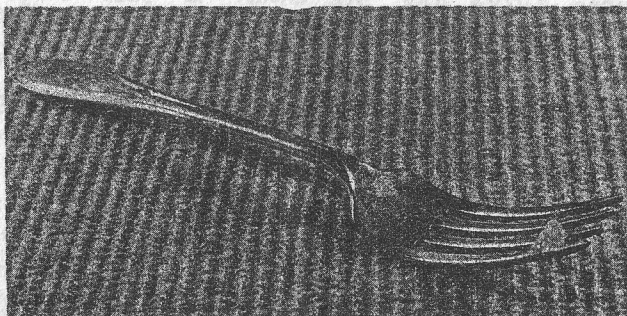
"wicked" - it's a slang word used in them parts (especially amongst my co-workers). It seems to be the only slang word in many folks' vocabulary so it has many functions to serve. In fact, it seems to be used to mean anything. Just substitute it for any word. "You're wicked" could translate to "You are nice" or "You are not nice" or even "You are cottage cheese."

Bonus extra wicked points are awarded if you can fit the word into one sentence 3 or more times.

Candlepin bowling - I'd never heard of this til I saw it and when I saw it, I didn't know what the hell was happening. Basically, this New England style of bowling is similar to regular bowling - you try to knock ten pins down with a ball. The difference is the pins are skinnier and taller and the ball is a lot smaller and you get three shots per frame. It's fun even if it's not as loud as "big ball" bowling.



Well, I worked at this place for a short while. The folks I worked with were nice. They all knew each other and hung out together and even referred to themselves as a family. Often they'd go out after work and I'd have to come up with some excuse to not go along. If this was indeed some type of "family" then I played the same role that I do with my real family: the silent and estranged son who takes advantage of free eats but who doesn't stick around for very long.



Egg remains on fork after washing, a reminder that both dishwashing and service personnel should check dishes and utensils carefully before service.

QUOTES

but she wouldn't listen,
she said she had other plans,
she said she had to wash her hair,
but I caught her washing pots and pans -
- with another man!!

— SWAMP ZOMBIES

Speaking of Thelonious Monk:

I remember Monk doing his dancing bit. But sometimes, after he was through dancing, he'd wander into the kitchen and start talking to the dishwasher about God knows what. Once in a while he'd fall asleep at the piano, and when it was time for him to come in again, he'd wake up and start playing, just liked that.

IGGY TERMINI

Then at Tampa she fell ill and Gonzalo went on alone to New York. They struggled against starvation. Gonzalo had to wash dishes in restaurants. He could get no help from his rich family, having run away with a dancer!

The
Diary
of

Anais Nin

"What do you do?" somebody asked me.
"Fuck and drink."
"No, no, I mean what's your occupation?"
"Dishwasher."
"Dishwasher?"
"Yeh."

CHARLES BUKOWSKI

THE TIME I KNOCKED OUT ERNEST HEMINGWAY AND WAS DISCOVERED AS A NEW LITERARY GIANT :::::::::::::::

(Just when you thought there were no more Bukowski/dishwasher quotes out there...)

As a sophomore, I couldn't get back my old job waiting on tables at the TKE house because that job was reserved for freshmen pledges, but the coach arranged for me to get one of the more pleasant jobs available to a male at Eureka, washing dishes at Lyda's Wood, the girls' dormitory.

- RONALD REAGAN

(Thus proving that in dishwashing, as in life in general, scumbags do exist.)

BEN WEASEL'S DISHDOG DAYS

Anyway, the first job I had was washing dishes for this Italian joint called Wa-Pa-Ghetti's. I was thirteen. I lasted a month, which is how long I usually last at a job. The boss was ok and the other employees were cool to me I think cause I was a goofy little kid, always playing air guitar on the brooms and whatnot. Anyway, I cam in at 4:00 PM and the juvenile delinquent who had the shift befofe me didn't like doing silverware so he used to hide it under the sink. That way, we'd run out of silverware around dinnertime and I'd have to haul ass to get it done. Whatta prick.

When I was in drug treatment in Maine, washing dishes was a punishment for if you fucked up or whatever. They called it "hitting the pan". There were four houses and three of them just had nice little kitchens where you just washed the dishes that people ate off for the meals, a cakewalk. My house was where the main kitchen was - we cooked meals for 400 people, including about 120 in our house. Thus, we had the front pan, which was just dishes from the meal, and the back pan, which was all big pots and huge pans and whatnot from the cooking. The back pan assignment was like getting the maximum sentence for some stupid offense. The cooks never filled the pans with water and you didn't have a chance to do it yourself so I was forever scraping fucking caked on scrambled egg scum off the pans.

About two years ago, I worked in a big kitchen for the cafeteria for a G.E. plant in Wisconsin. They had a dishwashing machine, you just toss the racks of dishes in and throw the silverware in a bucket. I had to make little salads and stuff in the morning, then serve the slop to the suit and tie fucks, then they put their trays on a conveyer belt that ran down a tunnel into the kitchen. Only the genius who invented the concept for the tunnel wisely put a bend in it so the slobs who piled their trays with shit would cause big jam ups in the tunnel. This was, however, good for a smoke break, although the guy running the kitchen was this ~~XX~~ tyrannical little olf fart who thought he was still storming the beaches at Normandy or something - goofing off was verboten in a big way.

The other bad thing was that I worked with this 35 year old retarded guy, which wouldn't have been so bad except he was totally humorless. I was just a temp (I was supposed to work 7 days) but this was his job, and I think he resented someone new coming in to help with the dishes, he insisted on running the machine. I got stuck scraping off the trays and stacking up the dishes. Every few minutes, he would scream, "SILVER" in his Gomer Pyle voice. That was my signal to dump the silverware in the bucket, and also to take it out. It was sort of ~~XX~~ a dual-purpose scream, like "Aloha".

Anyway, it got so that even though I felt sorry for the guy cause he was retarded and all, I couldn't help but fuck with him a little, like I'd only fill the racks halfway, that drove him batshit. Or I'd drag ass on the silverware. I think that burned him up more than anything, he took great pride in his spotless silverware, and I'd just sort of slop the shit around, or "forget" to put the cleaning liquid in with it.

~~IT WAS~~ RIBBON'S OUT. ANYWAY, I QUIT
THE JOB AFTER THE SECOND DAY. IT WAS NICE, CAUSE
THE FIRST TWO DAYS, THE HEAD OF THE KITCHEN KEPT
SAYING, "YOU'RE GOING TO COME BACK ON MONDAY,
AREN'T YOU? = YEAH, YOU BET."

What's new in

It's been awhile since we've had an update from the fashion front.

As you may have noticed or experienced, the latest rage has been the radical introduction of clean underclothes!



CLEAN WHITE CAP

CLEAN SHAVEN

CLEAN UNDERSHIRT

CLEAN WHITE SHIRT

CLEAN UNDERCLOTHES

CLEAN WHITE TROUSERS

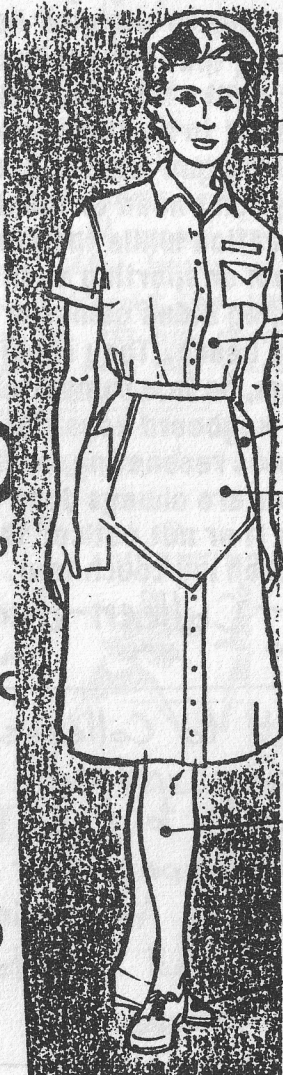
CLEAN WHITE SOCKS

NEATLY POLISHED SHOES

dishwasher fashion?

Though I do try
to stay in style,
I don't think I'm
quite prepared to
accept this crazy
new fad.

Call me old-fashioned.



HEADBAND AND HAIR NET

CONSERVATIVE MAKEUP

HAIR UP OFF COLLAR

CLEAN UNIFORM

CLEAN UNDERCLOTHES

CLEAN APRON

NO JEWELRY EXCEPT

- WATCH
- WEDDING RING

CLEAN HOSE

POLISHED ARCH-SUPPORTING
SHOES

DISHWASHING FOR BROWNIE POINTS

Awhile ago I had no pad, no pad with a roof and running water that is. What does one do when there are no funds to pay rent? Crash at their friends' homes and try to stay out of their space as much as possible. It is essential to keep your things in a tidy pile in a discreet corner at all times, not to eat their food without replacing it, and to flush your doos. Buying toilet paper and fixing waffles are good ways to win your host(ess)'s approval, but there is one thing that will really make you welcome and relieve a bit of guilt - WASHING THE DISHES - and not just your own. It's best to be kinda sneaky about this though; the last thing you want is your host/ess thanking you. They don't need to thank you. It's best to perform this operation while they are at their respective jobs or school or sporting event or post office run, while they're playing video games or at the donut bar or frolicking at the beach. They should, at the very least, be out of the room, be in a completely different room, door closed, keyboard keys clacking or clicking, or stereo on, or snores resonating, or tissue wadding. That way the dishes are always done and everyone can take credit for it or not notice. That was the valuable lesson I learned on my couch tour.

- Colleen-Bean

As a recent host to Colleen's couch tour, I can indeed attest to her ability to keep the dishes clean without one ever seeing her do them. An inspirational act to all, guests and visitors alike.

Common Dishwasher Problems and Solutions

PROBLEM: You've been breaking a lot of dishes at work.

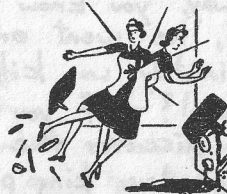
SOLUTION: What's the problem? Broken dishes are not your problem, though they can be the solution to your problems. Be it stress, boredom, or revenge, there's no easier way to enlighten a mood than by "accidentally" dropping a wad of twenty plates. "OOPS!" Now don't you feel better? The glorious sounds of crashing dishware has long been known as a therapeutic cure for any dishwasher's ailment (even the flu). And this very same sound never fails to make any boss cringe. Always an added bonus is to commit your "drop" while the boss is present so you can enjoy the pained expression on the old sourpuss' face.

Please note the cardinal rule to dishbreaking: break the dirty dishes! You don't wanna break dishes you just labored to clean, you wanna break the dirty ones so you don't have to clean 'em.

1. HURRYING!



2. COLLISION!



3. SPILLAGE!



4. SPILLED!



MOVIES

SCARFACE

Sure, you remember all the drugs and guns and nasty language from this flick, but do you remember when the Al Pacino character worked as a dishwasher? It was his first job after arriving in the U.S. from Cuba. The problem was he complained about his position from the start: "I didn't come to the United States to break my fucking back, man." Again he whined when he dissed his dishpan hands: "Look at this - fuckin onions."

His touchy attitude towards his occupation grew to a point where he finally snapped at a guy: "Don't you be calling me no fucking dishwasher cause I'll kick your fuckin monkey ass all over!.." But then he pulled the stunt which tugged at many a dishwashers' heartstrings. As he walked away from the jobsite, the boss yelled out to him: "Hey! Hey! Wath'chu guys doing? There's a lot of dishes to be washed!" Scarface replied "Wash em yourself! I retire," and then threw his apron at the boss-guy. I was touched and my tears were a'floodin.

Anyway, you know the rest - retired from dishwashing, he went on to the life of a drug lord and ultimately was killed in a blaze of over-dramatizing. The moral? - If you think dishwashing sucks, wait til you discover the drawbacks to a career of being a drug king pin.

A good movie but woulda been better if there were more dishwashing scenes.

Yeah, I know there's a new movie out, "Untamed Heart," which is a dishwasher/waitress love story. It's not playing in this area yet, so we'll have to discuss it in a future issue.

FRANKIE AND JOHNNY

She's a waitress (Michelle Pfeiffer), he's a cook (Al Pacino), they scammed on each other, and then got together. The end. Your basic story. The dishwasher at the N.Y. City diner where they worked was a 50-year-oldish background character who spoke only a couple forgettable lines (I forgot them). But there were two great moments involving him.

The first was a mere segue between two scenes. The camera angle placed the viewer inside the dishwashing machine. The machine's door opened and the dishwasher popped his head into view as he pulled the rack of steamy dishes away from the viewer. Beautiful.

The other swell moment occurred when the two lead characters were babbling about something boring (something to do with the plot). Over their shoulders, in the grainy hazy background, the dishwasher unloaded the machine and held a glass up to the light to inspect its cleanliness. An innocent movie-goer may have witnessed a dishwasher simply doing his job but a few folks (who can read deeper into these matters) knew the turmoiling mind of this complex character was actually crying out "SOMEONE'S GONNA PAY FOR ALL THE HURT DONE TO ME!!!" Maybe...

A good movie but woulda been better if there were more dishwashing scenes.

PROOF

An Australian flick in which a blind photographer befriended a dishwasher who took on the task of verbally describing the photos to the guy who, obviously, had never seen them. There weren't many scenes showing the dishwasher in action, but at least his occupation was supposed to be reflective of what kind of fellow he was - a typical guy who didn't know what he wanted and just fooled along through life. At the end, he quit the dishwashing spot to explore an exciting get-rich-quick scheme.

A good movie but....

SOME SHORT TALES

One of the many dishwashing jobs I've had in my life was scrubbing away at pizza hut. Pizza hut was a cool job because even though you had to bust your ass, there were a lot of cool co-workers there. I remember Kelley and I would be in the back and have huge stacks of pans waiting to be washed. I'm talking stacks higher than my waist. We were working hard and the soap and the shit was just a flying, there was nearly an inch of water on the ground. Seeing as how we weren't 18, we had to be out of there at 9:00 P.M. Our manager came back at 8:55 and asked if we would want to punch out at 9:00 and stay and finish and he'd pay us fo however long in cash. We said sure. It took us about 45 minutes to finish. We told our manager we were done and he said he'd left our cash in the backroom. He told us to go get it, then get out of there. I couldn't believe he told us to leave like that after we illegally stayed and worked. We walked to the backroom and on the table was a thank-you note, two long-neck Millers, and a plastic cup with two nice sized fucking buds in it. That's right boyeeeee!!
Ganjall

I guess the significane of this dumb little story of mine is if you don't just always think of yourself, if you care just a little about others, and do something to help them out, the reward is great. Whether it be material or not. And this world needs a lot more love!!

- Jamie Rohrbeck

I spent 8 years in the boy scouts, + as we went camping one weekend every month that entire time, I learned how to wash dishes, pots, + pans properly. Failure to do so would result in the shits or other sicknesses.

Well, when I met the girl I'm presently with back in late '89, we decided to drop acid one night. Everything went well most of the night, but when we went to take shelter from the cold, damp night in a broken down van, she started to freak out. As I was staying with a friend, I had to wait until he woke up before I could get into the house (I had no key). Well, when I was finally able to get someone up, the girl simply drove off. Without me. But with my wallet + belt. I flipped. I called her house several times, but got only her answering machine. I had to do something, as I couldn't sleep due to the strong acid + the possibility of never finding this girl again. There was a large load of dishes, so I started washing them. By the time I was finished (about an hour and a half, I think. I went slow), I had calmed down + could deal with things. - Rev. Randy

I worked on and off as a dishwasher for about 6 years in Grand Forks, North Dakota. I worked as one in Sambo's, some small ma and pa store called Smitty's, at the University of South Dakota and at other places I just can't recall. My job at Smitty's lasted only about four months. I had a real dork for a boss. This guy (I'll call him Mr. Smith) had a real small steamer for a dish washer, and I could only shove in one rack of dishes at a time, steam them for maybe 5 or 10 minutes, then unload them while I tried to get another load washed. It took forever. I was constantly behind, and Mr. Smith was always on my ass to get my work done. He was particularly pissed off during the end of the day when the cook would pile up her pots and pans on me at the last minute. Mr. Smith allowed me to eat any of the chicken he had left over. This was to be the beginning of the end of Mr. Smith's and my relationship. One day, about ten minutes before we closed, I ate the last of Smitty's chicken. At the last minute, some surprise customers came in. Of course, Mr. Smith's cook didn't have any chicken ready for them, and her utensils that she used for cooking were being washed by me at the time. She rushed to get the utensils and the customers had to wait a half hour for their chicken. In the meantime, Mr. Smith walked into my dish room and said "you son of a bitch, you ate the last of my chicken!" I thought about his remarks and in my best fashion, left the dish room, the dishes, and the dishwasher. dirty dishes and all. I'm sure the little fascist had to do the dishes himself!

- DAVID FIELDS

X

I was excited to see the movie "Malcolm X" because I wanted to see how Spike Lee would relate Malcolm's days as a dishwasher to his rise as a prominent leader. When I heard reports that the movie avoided all references to Malcolm the Dishwasher, I realized why there were no "X" dishwashing aprons being marketed.

So let us recall here, Malcolm's glory days:

His first stint, according to his autobiography, was in Mason Michigan and lasted through his 7th and 8th grade years.

And I hadn't been in the school long when Mrs. Swerlin, knowing I could use spending money of my own, got me a job after school washing the dishes in a local restaurant. My boss there was the father of a white classmate whom I spent a lot of time with. His family lived over the restaurant. It was fine working there. Every Friday night when I got paid, I'd feel at least ten feet tall. I forget how much I made, but it seemed like a lot. It was the first time I'd ever had any money to speak of, all my own, in my whole life. As soon as I could afford it, I bought a green suit and some shoes, and at school I'd buy treats for the others in my class—at least as much as any of them did for me.

Later, when he was 16, he landed a job as fourth cook on the train between Boston and Washington D.C.

Fourth cook, I knew, was just a glorified name for dishwasher, but it wouldn't be my first time, and just as long as I traveled where I wanted, it didn't make any difference to me.

The kitchen crew, headed by a West Indian chef named Duke Vaughn, worked with almost unbelievable efficiency in the cramped quarters. Against the sound of the train clacking along, the waiters were jabbering the customers' orders, the cooks operated like machines, and five hundred miles of dirty pots and dishes and silverware rattled back to me.

Malcolm X even went as far as doing some dishwasher name-dropping in his autobiography. Speaking of the various folks with the nickname "Red" in Harlem, he said—

The other was "Chicago Red." We became good buddies in a speakeasy where later on I was a waiter; Chicago Red was the funniest dishwasher on this earth. Now he's making his living being funny as a nationally known stage and nightclub comedian. I don't see any reason why old Chicago Red would mind me telling that he is Redd Foxx.

Yes, Redd Foxx of "Sanford and Son"!!

Professionals as domestics

There isn't a demand for professional dishwashers in only the food service industry. In fact, I was had a job as a domestic dishwasher. I was employed by a social services program which sought to keep older folks out of nursing homes. These people were unable to do their household chores but they weren't so out of it that they had to be institutionalized. I'd begin my visits to their homes by washing the dishes (I just couldn't wait) and then I'd do whatever else needed to be done - cleaning, shopping, cooking (which called for more dishwashing). My cooking experiences showed me old folks' diets get pretty twisted down the stretch. One woman had me fry a couple slabs of baloney for her breakfasts. Another woman ingested only coffee, croissants, and bananas and nothing else. Since they weren't paying my wages (the state was), they didn't mind if I just hung out with them while I was on the clock. We'd watch t.v. game shows and I'd listen to their tales of how life was 60-70-80 years ago.

Professional dishwashing in the domestic scene isn't always fun though. A lot of times roommates expect you to do the dishes. If you just came home from your dishdog job, the last thing you're gonna wanna do is sling more suds. But it's true, your position can work to your advantage. Once, a roommate trimmed my rent by \$50 in exchange for me doing all the dishes. It was fine by me even though he seemed to dirty every dish and utensil and pot everyday to get his money's worth. Another time, years ago, two friends let me stay with them as long as I did the dishes and mixed the drinks. Someday I'll get around to starting my free-lance domestic-dishwashing business.



¿Qué hacen la señora y el chico?

La señora lava los platos.

El chico se lava las manos.

Twenty Years ago

Twenty years ago...long before I took that hesitant but definite step into the world of white middle class respectability, before I voted Republican (in fact, before I voted), long before wives and children, mortgages and dogs, the station wagon and PTA...long before all that, I was happy. And the happiest days were my dishwashing days - days I secretly long for, days I fantasize about returning to.

They took place during my junior year of high school in 1969. I was a student in a boarding school in Darien, Connecticut, but study was not my priority - my job was. Several of the students and even a teacher or two had found work as busboy/dishwashers at a pancake house located on the Boston Post Road, an historic trail that led from Massachusetts to Florida. There, those of us from more modest families were able to earn enough to purchase our weekly supply of hallucinogens (the wealthier students used their allowances).

My roommate, Bob, and I worked at night, sneaking out of the dorm during study time, padding our beds to get through lights-out bed checks, and following back trails off campus and into town. This became much easier after we got our house-father a job there, too.

The job was easy except for Friday and Saturday nights when the bars closed. Those nights, the restaurant filled with upper-middle and upper class drunks in for an early breakfast. We would usually run out of silverware, a fact that seemed not to bother our distinguished guests who demonstrated their ability to devour syrupy pancakes with their bare fingers.

The waitresses would holler and scream as we cleared tables post-haste and slammed dishes into the trays and dishwasher to accommodate the rush. Only Ella, the fat and level-headed, cigarette sucking head-waitress would maintain her composure under the stress. At these times,

our breakage increased, both accidental and intentional. We found we could really piss off the waitresses we didn't like by slowing their sections to a crawl.

When we would get so backed up at the dishwasher that he couldn't take it anymore, an entire bustray would be likely to fall into a trash can. This, didn't happen very often, but when it did it gave us a feeling of accomplishment having expressed our anger and resentment toward the greedy capitalists who owned and frequented this establishment (any lofty excuse for having fun, eh?).

The slow times had their moments as well. We would sometimes assemble meals from the partially eaten refuse returned in the bustray. We'd set up a plate or two complete with soggy garnish and sneak it into the galley, put it up, and call a waitress' number for pick-up. Or we would set-up the waitress' break table with a feast of returned delicacies.

The best times, though, were when both Bob and I would be cleaning up in the back after closing, having water and sponge fights, tossing pots and pans back and forth, and generally screwing around. We would play baseball with utensils and potatoes, go bowling down the slatted galley floor, or do gross things with leftover pancake batter.

Anything for diversion.

I could go on and on about the waitresses, the owner, the customers... But suffice it to say that I often feel the urge to abandon my family, flee the conventional/responsible existence that I lead, assume a new identity, and return to the carefree and enjoyable life of dishwasher. I would be grateful if anyone has any practical advice on such disappearing acts.

More Alaskan Stuff

At my Alaskan job, me + my co-dishwasher Sam often discussed plans to injure ourselves so we could be sent back to the lower 48 with plenty of lucrative disability pay. Since union regulations stipulated we'd be entitled to all wages otherwise lost due to injury, we made a pact. If one of us was injured, the other would continue to doctor the time books, so the injured party would still benefit from the scammed bonus hours we gave ourselves.

Various ideas were tossed around of how we could incapacitate ourselves. Most plans involved knives and fingers, or heavy objects and toes. They weren't the most pleasantest thoughts I've ever come up with, but thoughts of being paid to not work made it worthwhile.

One plan centered around the flimsy floor in front of the dish sink. The floorboards were so old and worn and water-logged they were in a prime state for a dishwasher to fall through 'em and break a bone or two. But, of course, the shitty management came along and took the risk away from us by re-flooring the dishroom.

Falling down the stairs was another plan of ours. There was one stairway which was often slippery. Since people were known to have stumbled on them, it wouldn't have been too suspicious if I happened to tumble down the entire flight. At one point, I was standing at the top, envisioning myself bouncing down the steps and onto disability pay. Ah, with such ease.... Then it struck me - what if I were to squish my head open or crunch my spine? I'd spend the rest of my life paralyzed because of some idiotic attempt to squirm out of a job. I'd feel awfully stupid, so I didn't go for it....

Ray has just rolled into town and is asking about the prospects for work ---

Ray: ...most of the places you go there's always a place you can get a day's labor.

Gorman: Down here you can get a job dishwashing for a day.

Ray: That's what I need now, a day's work, not a full week's work.

--- From the 1956 movie "Men of the Bowery" - the best movie I've seen in the past couple years. It also contained this cool quote: "I can think of a lot more pleasant ways of making a buck than working..."

Two feet away from Joe is a stack of clean dishes.



When Joe sneezes the germs whiz through the air and land on almost everything in the area including the stack of clean dishes. As a result the clean dishes become contaminated with love.

A FINAL NOTE

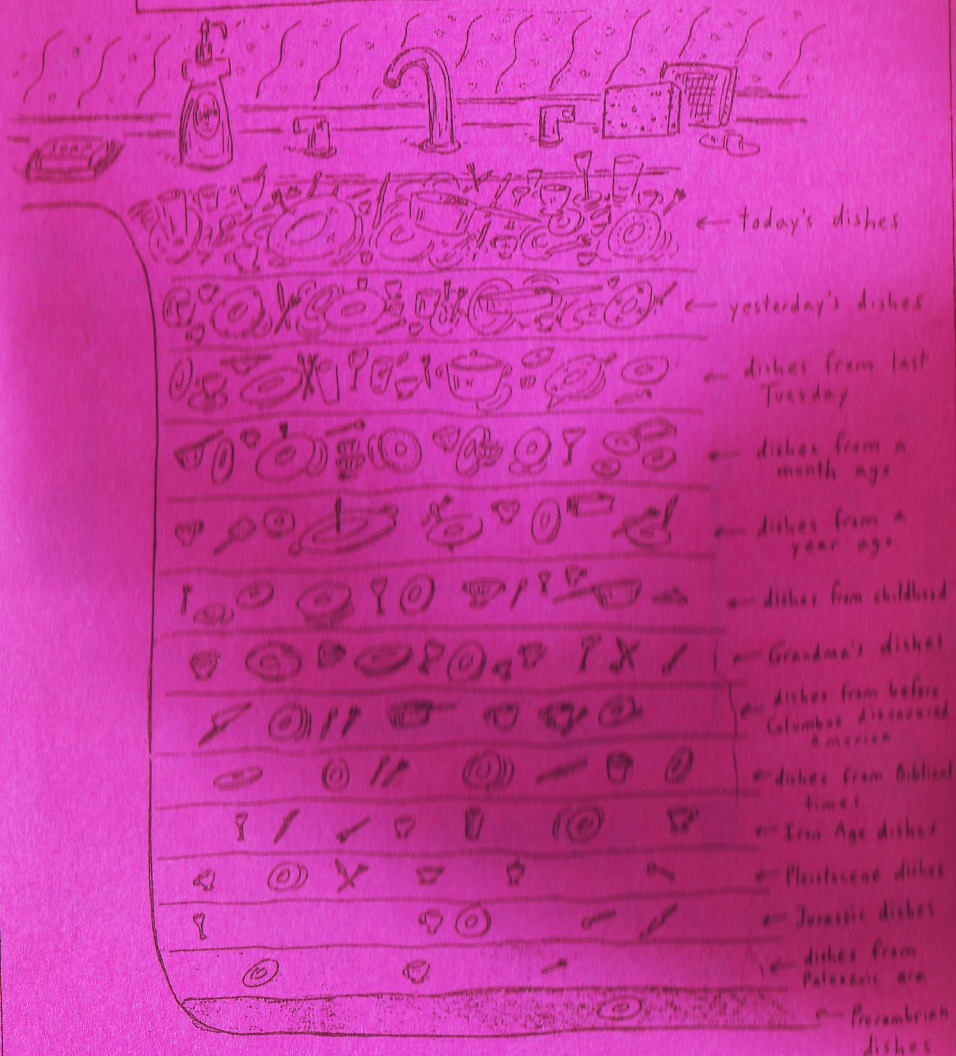
Copies of this thing in your hand are available for a buck postage paid or trade (bulk trading encouraged!). DISHWASHER #10 will be a comix issue. Oh, also available are aprons + shirts that look like this. If you want one, send me some dough or something.

-dishwashin' pete.



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