

## SQUARE PEG...ROUND HOLE

As what seemed the last summer of our youth faded, a few of my gang squeezed what we could from our brief interlude between college terms and booked passage on the Matson steamship, Lurline, to sail in luxury, rather than fly the shaky, propeller-driven planes of the early sixties. Uncomfortably mature in the nattiest dress of the day, we found ourselves the focus of attention as our parents, girlfriends, and peers gathered at Honolulu Harbor, ticker tape streaming, and the Royal Hawaiian Band playing "Aloha Oe."

In keeping with our miscreant character, we distorted the solemnity of farewell in some final repudiation of all that growing up stood for. The dignified liner held no end of potential for pranks, and we had one going already. Lines cast ashore, the band playing furiously, a great commotion stirred in the crowd as the whistle blew and the ship pulled away, for on the upper deck we dropped trou' and hung B.A.'s or bare asses over the rail. Then three stowaways amongst us leapt back toward shore. The crowd gasped in unison as a trio of fully-dressed travelers cavorted through the air a hundred feet into the water below. Only their leis surfaced as they swam under the pier, as planned.

So the sun tried once more to set upon my childhood. The great white ship slipped past Diamond Head into the open ocean, a lingering glow illuminating her course, as I watched my island world fade into memory. Time was passing again: a page to etch one's tiny drama on, a place to practice in, or maybe a piggybank to store one's dreams. An ever-increasing solitude began to consume me. All I'd known was making fun of life. It was becoming imperative to find some meaning. Playing the prankster had stopped working.

The depths were unfathomable. With the dark sea looming all 'round, I felt threatened facing the unknown. Scurrying back to our stateroom I sought solace in companionship, no matter how shallow. It wasn't much more than that. This was supposed to be a simple joy ride, and I tried to calm myself and join my more adjusted pals in pleasures of the moment.

I still get chills recalling the older woman's gown shimmering with sequins as my hands fumbled to unhook her diamond necklace. She'd asked me to her room after the Captain's Ball, and it seemed we were walking backward in time. I knew every word before it was spoken, felt every touch and urging, and allowed her to take me on what became a drama I watched unfold. I was safe there, hidden from the eyes of reality, warm at her breast, and nurtured by my lusty matron like an infant with a hard-on.

It was more fun teasing the two lesbians who sat at our

dinner table, although they didn't award me sexual favors, but with this odd trio of feminine companions I practiced shipboard rapport in an imagined world at large. Our boyhood gang seemed to be breaking up. We often went our own ways. I was drawn to my lover in First Class, Greg to a fox in the crew's quarters, and the rest explored the engine room or harassed the Chief Mate. The ocean, like time, slipped by, disregarding all of us as if it had better things to do.

In Los Angeles, we split up forever to travel our separate paths. My childhood buddies headed for medical and law schools on the East Coast, while I threw my gear in Butch's station wagon and headed north to Malibu, where we surfed Rincon and Point Concepcion and planned our Tijuana vacation. His mom liked me! She was the only mother that ever liked me, other than my own, maybe. Her beach house in the Shore Colony was full of kids all the time and was my second home.

Headquarters for the school year became the Sigma Alpha Epsilon house on fraternity row, where that group, much to their later dismay, adopted me from the New Orleans chapter without a trial run. It was there I met Seely, master thief, and Goring, graduate prankster, with whom the school year sped by at a marvelous pace. We terrorized the freeways in Goring's roadster, a primer-colored cigar with a twelve-cylinder engine, looting stores, sparking in sorority house windows, and honing the sport of the RF to undreamed of new horizons.

It was amazing what the three of us could come up with. We constructed a huge catapult on the frat house roof, and with me directing trajectory calibrations from the target zone, discovered we were able to plop one-pound balloons right into University Square and the library steps. Some of these amazing shots were almost three-quarters of a mile, and using the telephone near the statue of the Trojan Horse, I'd zero them in while Seely called up vector points from his room to Goring who manned the giant slingshot. Using a boat winch mounted with adjustable wing nuts, we had painted marks for priority targets, and I could barely maintain anonymity as groups of daintily dressed coquettes were bombarded in colored water out of the ether. It was a two-man job to load the really long shots, and Goring nearly lost his hand in a misfire, so we settled down to plan for spring break.

He couldn't wait that long, and the night we returned from a cruise to Laguna, brought out his crossbow. At midnight, crouched near our catapult, we were held in the thrall of a master prank. "Twang!" His fiery arrow swished down fraternity row, and with a tiny flicker, found its mark in the top of the huge royal palm on the Pi Phi lawn. We were bathed in the glory of its blaze long before fire trucks arrived. While they raised their ladders, we let fly a few balloon shots into the bewildered onlookers. Watching him at work in the darkness, I realized he reminded me of Haggard.

It was that same gleam in his eye, the huge forehead, twinkling glasses, and mysterious grin. He was one of them, another mentor in a resistance movement refuting conformity.

Unlike Seely who always plotted against the universe and took from it, Goring and I just altered it for laughs. I learned from both of them, participating for fun and profit, bored by the university's puny rewards for regurgitation of predigested trivia, and more inclined to reject society's standards than accept them. Seely robbed all the houses on the row during the break, and came up with an insurance scheme that made me enough money to travel around the world. Before I left, we'd terrorized the entire campus, including Watts, the Coliseum, and the Rose Bowl.

I taught some football players how to trip the old payphone in the Law School building with a bent coat hanger. Jim Brown and I called all over the country. Butch was surfing then in Spain, and hearing his voice from that faraway place, a larger worldview began to take shape. I traded my "woodie" for a hot motorcycle and began riding with Steve McQueen and his friends from McIver Cycles on the slopes of the Baldwin Hills Dam. When disaster struck and it collapsed, we scrambled, standing on our footpegs, through the flooded streets and debris from swamped stores, avoiding rolling cans and floating turkeys. These were the moments I lived for...not the commonplace drudgery of school.

An anthropology class stands out because the teacher was brilliant and described Laos as "the land of a million elephants and one pink parasol." Little did I know then how greatly that country would figure in my life. Otherwise I cheated, copied, and slid by, considering academia to be nothing more than bothersome. I wonder now what I might've become if my boundless energy for disruption had been directed into learning.

So while my parents thought their son was studying, I was climbing over the fence at Universal Studios. We were on pirate ships and western sets, in wardrobe lockers and dressing rooms, stealing swords and guns, and sniffing starlets' panties. Resultant trespassing charges and the scene at Ralph's Markets pretty well cinched my career as a wanderer rather than College Joe.

The fact the fraternity ranks included an heir to that market chain eased the court's resentment to our removal of the steaks and rum, but it was time to move on anyway--enough flaming palm trees and narrow escapes from now enraged targets of our tomfoolery. A search turned up the catapult, and the gears of USC, much like Tulane's, started to grind in my direction. Kennedy was killed just then, which catalyzed the utter collapse of my spartan courtship with society and sent me into a near coma for a week. A distant beat grew louder.

I sold my worldly possessions, and lying flat on the bike's seat made it to San Francisco in eight hours. I

cruised through the city, avoiding cable car tracks, and crossed the Golden Gate Bridge, turning around and flying over its majestic span a few more times for the wondrous effect. What a feeling--this freedom! I felt like heading across the country with no purpose other than finding visions like these to swallow me up. Berkeley loomed ahead, where I had to check in with Hardy, master ratfucker and bon vivant. Maybe he'd join me in my caper--not just America--why not the world?

After comparing notes on the Lurline departure, and what the Harbor Police did when they finally fished Hardy from beneath the dock we got down to strategies. I had three-thousand ill-gotten dollars and the motorcycle. He had his stereo, bicycle, guitar, and book collection. We began to liquidate. One day we loaded our meager possessions, borrowed Konawai's Volkswagen, and like we told him, "went shopping." We neglected to tell this odd little neighborhood groupie that the store was in Florida. He was so lame we couldn't possibly take him along.

Hardy was drunk in the back seat for days at a time, melting into the floorboards, farting, puking, and pissing 'til I refused to look back anymore and drove with both windwings fully extended. He'd emerge long enough at service stations to trundle through their restrooms, where he'd rip Kotex and condom machines off the walls and beat them out of their coins. Sometimes I'd rev the engine as a diversion to "cover" his racket, and this became such a regular practice, one could've plotted our course across the nation on a map of complaints. Nobody ever seemed to notice him, or perhaps the opposite was true, since he was so huge and smelled so awful they pretended he didn't exist. In this fashion, we proceeded across the deserts and plains of the great Southwest.

We probably never should have stopped at the Park's mansion in Dallas. We were definitely so out of place that no words can say, and it's certain we shall never get up that two-mile driveway again. I can still remember the look on the butler's face when he ushered Hardy into the foyer. A fine old Negro with flashing, white teeth and twinkling eyes, he'd watched over the Park sisters from birth, yet had "never seen the likes of callers such as the gentlemen from Hawaii." Quick as a flash he took us to his personal quarters and urged us to "wash up good, boys," and being the same size as Hardy dressed him in the first clean clothes since we'd set out.

We were eating fried chicken in steamy opulence by the indoor pool as Mr. Park came down the spiral staircase, delicately clutching the gold balustrade. A huge parrot in a gilt aviary cried out to him. He blinked like the bird and approached us tentatively, as one might a cadaver. "Just passing through, sir," I said encouragingly, and introduced Hardy, who due to his just being fed, was fairly civil. Mr

Park seemed pleased to see me, as I'd taught the girls to water-ski on his private island back home. After a short chat he offered us a guest house near the "ninth hole" for the night, a grave error on his part. It was then I realized the manicured green stretching for miles around us was his golf course!

We followed the butler in two electric carts to our quarters, which turned out to be a small castle with a wall-length aquarium and beer on tap. While Hardy settled into the keg with his standard grunts and gusto, I explored our prestigious environs, planning to get into Sonia's pants immediately upon her arrival. The girls showed up at sundown, and by sunrise we were on the road, looking back anxiously to see if any of Park's people were in pursuit.

We slowed on the Dallas Parkway, in deference to John Kennedy, and observed a moment of silence glaring up at the Texas Book Depository Building. I'd sat in silence for five days, glued to the TV, strumming a solitary guitar note when he died, my tarnished view of the American dream dissolving utterly. It was part of the reason I left. It just didn't seem to pay off playing by the rules...no matter who you were.

Hardy was still pink and whimpering in pain from the scalding he'd gotten when he passed out in the solarium's shower. The twenty nozzles spewing steam on his lobster-red hulk couldn't be stopped 'cause he'd twisted all the handles off. When we dragged him out, he lunged suddenly, and Sonia's sister, Patty, got under him, landing on a cocktail glass which put a gross, elliptical cut in her fanny. She damn near bled to death on the spot. The butler scurried to our aid, but could not fathom the extent of damage and derangement he encountered.

While he shut off the water main, dressed for battle in yellow rain gear and boots, and mopped up what seemed like gallons of blood, we hauled Patty down to the same emergency entrance they'd taken JFK into, got her ass stitched back together, and returned to the scene of the crime. Hardy promptly gobbled most of her pain pills, and while I was in the master bedroom humping Sonia, he took off for a moonlit tour in the golf cart.

It was almost light when I heard him return, and he was soaking wet, reeling stubbornly like a prize fighter hit too many times in the head. I ran outside where, sure enough, silvery tracks led right into the lagoon...bubbles marking his choice for a parking spot. Just then a horrifying crash of glass and great swoosh of water came from the lounge, followed by a garbled groan. Flopping around like a beached whale, Hardy sat amidst all the fish from the shattered aquarium. He was grinning and holding the pump handle in one hand, his half-full mug in the other.

So we left without goodbyes. His malodorous hulk wallowed in the befouled quagmire of the back seat and heaved

once more in snores, farts, and moans, while I sat silently reminiscing on Camelot as the innocuous little VW tooted along with its windwings at full extension. The loop around Dallas straightened out to the open road. A few more Kotex machines and we'd be in New Orleans.

The swamps got thicker, and every once in a while we'd spot the Mississippi wandering around like it had lost its way. Hardy was more conscious now as we shifted to Jax beer and laughed about Konawai waiting for us to return from the store. We plotted a moral solution: We'd give his car to a hitchhiker at journey's end to return to him. As we previewed our upcoming world tour Hardy muttered about Kotex machines in Europe and Asia while I wondered how long I could carry him. He was a great companion--so completely opposite from me, he simply lived life as it came to him, with no thoughts of why or what for...

Our stay in Louisiana was cut short by his lack of etiquette in the same whorehouse I'd toured with the frat rats, but we got even for the crabs on this round. The police were after us, as Hardy'd been sober enough to counterattack, and had done so with great vigor. The damage was astonishing, and he chuckled, holding his "hurricane glass" up to the passing swamps like a trophy awarded him for some sports event.

We picked up a baby alligator at a farm in Alabama where I'd stopped to hose out the backseat, and it kept him company in his swamp-like hovel as we headed for Fort Lauderdale and the Easter riots. "Where the Boys Are," by Connie Francis, beckoned us on the radio. That year was probably the wildest ever. I ended up on TV screens across the country, my smiling face surrounded by disgruntled cops and eager reporters. That's how Konawai found his car, but by then it was a little late.

I'd never seen so many foxy girls in one place, and looking back, this was when ratfucking graduated to girl fucking, and the meaning of life broadened somewhat. I simply walked the alligator down the beach, and girls thought he was so cute and Hardy so ugly, I became their logical choice. It actually worked, and for five blissful days I was in "lust" quite a few times.

Some confrontation with the police was escalating into a riot--just what we'd all come for--as thousands of us poured onto the beach, taunting authority, and seeking the center of what was happening. I handed Oscar, the alligator, to Hardy and shimmied up a coconut tree to get a look around. Suddenly the sea of humanity had an object to concentrate on, and as I looked down, the masses cheered. Angry cops circled the tree and the crowd began chanting, "Let him be! Let him be!" Well, I was just fine up there and began to negotiate, with the aid of a UPI cameraman.

It's easy to imagine what a scene it turned into--a simple thing blown totally out of proportion. I clung to my

perch for over an hour while the mob grew larger. It seemed the authorities were gonna cut the tree down to save face, or bring in a hook and ladder truck to sieze my young ass, rather than face any humiliation or failure "to get their man." The sea of faces swelled to thirty-thousand, and I felt like the Pope. There was an aura of power attached to such notoriety. What could or would they do to me? Basically untrusting, I waited while the crowd threw beer to me and cameras focused. In Hawaii, my parents wondered if that was really me grinning on the six o'clock news, while in Berkeley, Konawai shrieked in agony and scurried to the airport in tears, beating on the taxi's seat the whole way.

It took quite a while to get a truce worked out, especially over the crowd's droning surge and squawking police bullhorns, but the UPI guy guaranteed me immunity, and various self-proclaimed lawyers came forth with binding arbitration. Sure the crowd would dismember those who didn't keep their word, I finally slithered down to do an interview on the outlook of today's youth, or something vague. Escorted away a "cult hero," I found being famous helped one score chicks. From then on it was my town.

When the girls started to leave, Hardy and I set out for Nassau and a practice run at foreign Kotex machines. We were talking some lifeguards into taking care of Oscar when Konawai spluttered up, red-faced and foaming at the mouth. Shit! Now we'd have to haul him around with us. After he calmed down, we loaded our worldly things and headed south.

I'm glad he was with us when his car blew up so he knew for sure we didn't sell it. When it died, we pushed it into the Okefenokee Swamp, and leaving Oscar on its roof, our company hitched onward. Konawai got real drunk in the next small town and stumbled into the hands of the local gendarmes. We thought it prudent to leave him there in jail to cool off.

Nassau found us set up in the sail loft of a yacht club, where an unfamiliar worldly weariness overcame me. I reverted to reef walking, conversing with my finny friends, and trying to find in nature what I couldn't discover in myself--some peace of mind. While Hardy drank himself into oblivion with the natives on the pier, I wandered the beaches alone. The water was really clear and the fish were all new, but there was only so much they could do for me now. An exterior calm hid turbulent currents raging beneath the surface. I knew where I had to go...

I'd actually come just to see if William Kidd's carvings were real and not something I dreamed. Before sunset, I crept up to the fort and stayed 'til dark with my pirate counselor, trying to decipher a message I sensed was carved in those old stones. Seagulls circled tall masts of ships below while I pondered going back in time to be Captain Kidd or one of his bunch. It was confirmed there...my trip around the world became an obsession. It didn't matter whether I

stowed away, signed on as a seaman, or stole the price of passage...I was on my way.

I had to go "over the hill," where white people seldom ventured, to find Hardy and his consorts drinking like the world was about to end. He was in his element at last, and I considered leaving him with his sword swallows, limbo dancers, and reggae revelers. He certainly could never fully engage himself in my quest. We didn't even speak the same language when it came to such things. He fit in better cleaning conch shells with his black mama by the seashore. The wide world loomed ahead, and after thinking it over I gathered him from a flurry of farewell parties and headed for New York and my voyage to somewhere else.

The rusty '49 Ford left me apprehensive from its first belch of blue smoke, but for a hundred bucks it looked like our ticket to the Big Apple. If I'd known we'd have to go all the way back to Berkeley in it, I definitely would've continued shopping. But we got this deal off a porter in the airport, walked directly to the "beater," and simply drove away. It was that easy. Unfortunately it took equal parts of gas and oil to motivate this troglodyte up the highway. We filled the trunk with five-gallon cans, and while Hardy worked over restrooms, I made deals with attendants for used oil, as a blue haze covered our comings and goings.

We had to bail Konawai out. After all he had no ID or money and would've just rotted in the crotch of the South if we hadn't. So he promised to shut up, and we headed off once more. The rest of the trip was uneventful. Just before my ship weighed anchor, I fell into a morbid swoon with the bad news received at Cornell University. There, at Greg's fraternity house, a draft notice waited for me like a noose. Geez, this was not what a world traveler needed at such a pregnant moment as final departure!

We had to drive straight through in shifts to meet my interview deadline in Hawaii. Damn, this was a part of growing up I hadn't paid enough attention to! The goofing off in Nassau had blown my chance to catch a boat to Europe before this dreaded call to arms arrived. I seemed caught in a giant spider web but was too beaten by massive mood swings washing over me to even wriggle.

Back home, it took some serious squirming to get out of the Army's clutches, but I was truly too disturbed to be an orderly robot in any organization. I let them know this at an intense level, and was deferred to 1-Y status on medical grounds, as I'd conveniently developed an ulcer. Something far deeper than the draft was eating at me...the very enigma of existence was forming up, and my devil-may-care act was utterly incapable of dealing with it.

I sold motorcycles for the Honda shop, became a hot rider on the motocross circuit, and surfed some, but nothing really mattered. Even my girlfriend, Kela, couldn't reach



me. My parents had long given up. The urge to follow my pirate friend's footsteps overcame me, and driven by forces which remained unclear, I left for Tokyo, the Olympic Games of '64, and a vague spectre awaiting me.

An adventurous pal, Zander, came along to see the world, but it was obvious soon enough that I was seeking far more than a tourist's view of picturesque places. As much as we shared in the common ground of our pranksters' past, something was seething inside of me to get to the bottom of it all. I would've gone without him...this much is certain.

I just didn't fit into the pattern of life anywhere, no matter what shape its holes. Maybe others my age shared such confusion, but the tempo of delirium began to accelerate as we left the light of the western world. Entering Asia I was enveloped by a shroud of darkness, and stood naked and alone, hearing its call grow louder with each step forward.