



*NATIONAL LAMPOON REVISITED*

**December 4, 2010**

**LIVE from the New York Public Library**

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**Celeste Bartos Forum**

**PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER:** Good evening. My name is Paul Holdengräber, and I'm the Director of Public Programs here at the New York Public Library, otherwise known as LIVE from the New York Public Library. First of all, I would like to thank warmly Flash Rosenberg. **(applause)** Flash is featured—Flash is featured in the November 29 issue of the *New Yorker*, in Talk of the Town, an event we did with Jay-Z, which I'll talk about in a minute. She's featured in that issue, so you might want to read a little bit more about Flash Rosenberg, but I think this presentation that we showed you gives you a little bit of

the spirit of what we try to capture every evening—three, four, five, sometimes six times a week. I'm quite tired.

So tonight is closing night, and, as you know, my motto over the last two thousand days that I've been here at the LIVE from the New York Public Library, which is about six years, has been that I have wanted to make the lions roar, I have wanted to make a heavy institution dance. I have also wanted to know how much this institution weighs, and nobody in two thousand days has been able to tell me, and I just can't imagine that nobody knows. What I can tell you is this institution contains about fifty-two million items that go all the way under Bryant Park, so when tomorrow morning you go skating on Bryant Park, just know that you're skating on a lot of culture.

But tonight Rick Meyerowitz has asked me to say that the lions will not only roar, but in fact that he believes that the lions tonight for some reason are going to roar with laughter. He's written an extraordinary account of the *National Lampoon* in *Drunk, Stoned, Brilliant, Dead: The Writers and Artists Who Made the National Lampoon Insanely Great*. Here is the book. I think the graphics are rather wonderful—I'm sure the last row can read them, and he believes that tonight will be an evening where we will laugh a lot, which is I think something we really all need. He's also featured in the *New York Times* tomorrow, and I highly recommend that if you haven't yet received it—if you don't subscribe to the *New York Times*, you haven't received it, but if you do subscribe you will see a whole page in the *New York Times* announcing this book as a book you must buy, you must buy, you must have signed tonight. I am not paid by Abrams, but you must buy

the book tonight, and it will be signed by all of the *National Lampoon* veterans who are still alive. **(laughter)**

Tonight's event will last about—I always say these events last about as long as a psychoanalytical session if your shrink is generous. This is a double session. It will last about ninety-three minutes. If the talent present here is really talented, it will last eighty-five minutes. You know that Blaise Pascal said, quite famously, though Americans believe it's Mark Twain, but that's because they want to capture the spirit of the French and make it American, but Blaise Pascal said that if he had had more time he would have made it shorter. So in order to make this work tonight, each person—there are about seventeen people making presentations, and I'm told that they will be extremely good. Rick has told me they will be extremely good, and our friendship depends on it. After about four minutes I will do this. **(rings bell)** It will be annoying, and I want it to be annoying, so the talent will have four or five minutes to speak. At four minutes I will make this noise and then at five minutes I will make it very loud and the next person will come onstage.

The book will be signed, as I told you, at the end of the event by all the veterans of the *National Lampoon*. There are a few people at the end of the season that I like to thank. And I do it every end of season, so please bear with me, and even if you don't have it in your heart, please applaud. I'd like to thank 192 Books for tonight and for the whole season. They have been with us now for three years and they have been wonderful, have

provided us with books for each and every event, and most importantly, they remain independent. 192 Books. **(applause)**

Now it is also a moment for me to thank my staff and my support staff and all the extraordinary army of interns I have, and first and foremost I would like to thank these interns, so please applaud my nine interns. **(applause)** Our AV team—I'm not giving you a lot of time, because I also have a restricted amount of time, I'm not supposed to speak for more than twenty-five minutes. I have another minute. Our AV team—our videographers and filming crew and first and foremost Jared Feldman. **(applause)** Our catering head when we have the luxury of food and drink, which is very rare. Maria Rehmet **(applause)** Our new excellent photographer, Jori Klein, **(applause)** and of course our Artist in Residence, Flash Rosenberg. **(applause)**

And last and not least and your loudest applause, please, my extraordinary producer, the producer of all LIVE events for the last five years, about fifteen hundred days, a little more than fifteen hundred days. For over five years she has kept this joint going on and on and on and perfectly run as you can see, I would like you to give a tremendous round of applause to Meg Stemmler. **(applause)**

Now, very briefly, what a season this has been! Two weeks ago together with Cornel West I interviewed Jay-Z, and the lions did not roar on that night, as I said, but they rapped. I'm often asked to provide a list to people, a list of books to read, so I will quickly tell you who we had this season. Read all of the books—if you didn't come, read

them. An amazing season, which started with an interview with Supreme Court justice Stephen Breyer, read *Making Our Democracy Work*; followed by Jonathan Lethem, I can only encourage you to read his whole work; Edwidge Danticat and her excellent collection of essays *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*; and then Siddhartha Mukherjee, who wrote a book about cancer called *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer*, painful book but a book you must read. The poet laureate W. S. Merwin, read all his poems. Or, as he told me onstage, he suggested I simply read one poem a day. We all have time to read one poem a day.

As to Jay-Z, you probably all read Michiko Kakutani's review. *Decoded* is the book of a great poet. I knew nothing about hip-hop, I knew nothing about rap. I know a little bit more about hip-hop, I know a little bit more about rap. It is an extraordinary book. I highly, highly recommend it to you. Do also read Zadie Smith's book, which is called *Changing My Mind*. It is a collection of occasional pieces. She's written essays which really are quite profound, and I think you should all read them, and finally we had on this stage Keith Richards, I recommend that you also read his book, *Life*.

And then tonight, ladies and gentleman, is closing night when our two lions, who have names. I'm wondering if any of you know that they do have names—Patience and Fortitude will be roaring with laughter. Now, Fortitude—you will want to know which one of the lions is Fortitude, well, it's the one closest to Forty-Second Street. And then we will rest for a month and then on January 8th, we take five weeks of a break, we will begin again, and I want to announce as I do at the end of every season, I announce the

next season. I would like to announce what lies ahead of us. The lions will not maybe be roaring at the beginning of the season—they might be slightly undressing. We have a tribute to Gypsy Rose Lee on January 8th. Gypsy Rose Lee—you may not know this, but the Library has her archives, and we will be exhibiting on this stage not Gypsy Rose Lee of course, but some of the clothing she so, in such a talented way, removed. So an evening of burlesque, which will end at the Box.

We have Mark Salzman coming talking about his lack of faith, we have a whole series of events with French colleagues on issues of interest to North America, such as for instance, what constitutes an enemy, how do we define an enemy, and we will have on the American side Philip Gourevitch and Ann Stoler. On the French side we will have people like Gregoire Chamayou and Ariel Colonomos. None of those names will mean anything to you, probably the French names, maybe the Americans' names mean nothing to you, but the point is to make the French colleagues known to an American audience. Other topics include the pursuit of happiness and, of course, the other subject of happiness, which is unhappiness. Happiness has become, if you haven't noticed it, an industry, and on the American side, we are honored to have the one and only beloved Maira Kalman, who has just published *And the Pursuit of Happiness*, and Maira Kalman is also I must tell you featured in this *New York Times* Holiday Books, so I highly recommend you get that book—it's an extraordinary book, and Maira Kalman made me happy, incredibly happy—she did an event here on the blessed day of the nineteenth of October 2005 where she put to music *The Elements of Style*—Strunk and White *Elements*

*of Style* in the Reading Room, thereby breaking all the rules of the Reading Room, of silence and probably many rules of grammar.

We will also—what else, what else will we have? I have so many more things but I'm not going to read all of that. Maira Kalman that evening will be joined that evening by Lemony Snicket, which will be great fun. I think I'll pass on many of the other French events—on celebrity with Wayne Koestenbaum and Laura Kipnis, but we also will have not only things French, we will have A.B. Yehoshua, the Israeli writer, Colm Tóibín, David Brooks, Wole Soyinka, Harold Bloom, Tina Fey, Karen Armstrong, Julian Schnabel, and a tribute, another tribute, to Chris Blackwell, who is celebrating fifty years of Island Records.

And now do stay tuned to the season that comes up, just join our mailing list. And now lend your support to this extraordinary institution called the New York Public Library, and now, ladies and gentlemen, the lights will go down a little bit more and it is time to watch a little bit of *Animal House*.

**(applause)**

**(scene from *Animal House* plays)**

**(applause)**

**PETER RIEGERT:** Hello, is this working? My name is Peter Riegert, thank you. I know time is relative and that memory can't be trusted, but am I crazy, or do I look exactly like that from thirty-three years ago, it's terrifying to watch yourself. I'm very happy to be here tonight to celebrate the *Lampoon* community and I of course loved the magazine over the years. You've got to tip your hat to a magazine that puts on its cover a picture of a gun being held up against a dog's head threatening to kill it in hopes of extorting money from your readership. Obviously *Animal House* was created by a lot of writers, Doug Kenney, and Chris Miller, and Harold Ramis, who were instrumental in putting the film together. Beautifully cast by John Landis. This scene that you watched tonight, I mean, it was kind of cropped, it was hard to tell everything, it was shot almost thirty-three years to the day, just to give you an idea of time, thirty-three years before 1977 was 1944, so it's kind of frightening how fast the decades go by.

Obviously as an actor, one of the things you hope is to get into something that's well written, and you want to have good dialogue of course, and if you're really lucky, you get to say lines that are memorable, and I had quite a few of them. To me, one of the things, one of my favorite lines from this scene is the reaction from one of the coeds from the Emily Dickinson College that we picked up in which Tom Hulce says, "What's your major?" and she says, "Primitive cultures," and we cut to DuWayne Jessie playing Otis Day from Otis Day and the Knights. What I love about the dialogue from this film is that things had more than one meaning, and if primitive means naïve, I think that the double joke is the primitive culture were these white kids who had stumbled into this universe, and my character, whose nickname was Boon, was in love with this black culture, and I



think that celebration in the film was very special to me, and then all of the people I got to meet, most of whom I'm still friendly with and the fact that even to this day, eleven, twelve year olds, still stop me on the street to tell me that they can't wait to go to college, **(laughter)** so it's nice to know that generations continue to be corrupted. Anyway, I'm very happy to be here to celebrate with everybody else, I don't want Paul to ring that bell, so I'll defer some of my time and hope to see all of you later. Thanks very much.

**(applause)**

**JOE RANDAZZO:** Good evening, everyone. My name is Joe Randazzo, I'm the editor of the *Onion* newspaper. **(applause)** Thank you. What am I going to say? I didn't really prepare anything once I was told it was three minutes, honestly. It's pretty amazing to be here with all of these people who kind of mysteriously shaped my entire sense of humor. You know, I never knew anybody's name or what they looked like, except Tony Hendra, so to be here tonight is really quite an honor, and as the editor of the *Onion* I'm often sent books, which always suck, but I got a good book a few months ago, and it was this one, and it was the first time I've ever been excited to receive a book in the mail at work.

People also think I review books; I don't, just so you know. And passing it around the office that day was pretty fascinating, because people were reliving their own memories from childhood of the first time that they had seen the *National Lampoon*. For me it was being very confused about photos of Adolf Hitler posing on a beach in an erotic way.

When I saw them again in the book I was still kind of confused. And it was really—I just

realized there was this horrible, oh, you don't see the sweat stains. This picture of me, I have huge sweat stains.

And it was amazing to have this huge tome, this huge record of all of these years, and just to remember all of the stuff that they did many years before I was born, of course, but then it kind of pisses you off because you realize that they already did everything, it's all in that book and it's already been done. There's many times that I've wanted to put photos of cute animals on the cover with guns held to their head, but of course we cannot. So I want to thank everyone who is here from the *National Lampoon* and some of you other people as well, I guess, for having done what you did. The *Onion* would not have been possible without it. I don't think there would have been an audience for the *Onion* if the *National Lampoon* hadn't already paved that ground. Thank you very much. Thank you for having me, and I hope that everybody enjoys the rest of the evening. Thank you.

**(applause)**

**HILTON ALS:** They said it was fine to speak from this little podium, because I have a short tribute to George Trow. My name is Hilton Als and I'm a writer at the *New Yorker* magazine. George W. S. Trow is the only authentic American genius I know of who became himself in magazines. From the time he wrote for and edited the *Harvard Lampoon* in the 1960s, his distinctive syntax declared itself as a living thing. That is, his language was perfect, especially if you happened to live in the civilized, urbane, and humorous world that Trow thought was out there, always, if only he could find it. In the

meantime, he imagined such a universe, a universe where no one said the wrong thing or wore the wrong thing. In his understated short stories and plays and in the pages of the *National Lampoon* and in the mentoring he provided to writers like Jamaica Kincaid and Ian Frazier at the *New Yorker*.

I loved listening to their stories about Trow's considerable intelligence, his mad laugh, his even madder, utterly original, take on the need for manners in a lawless world. They could make you cry if they weren't so funny. I am thinking in particular of his anti-rudeness campaign. Ian Frazier told me once that Trow instituted something called the anti-rudeness campaign, where he would walk up to people in New York City and tell them they were "badly, badly, badly bred," if he considered themselves so. One day, Trau showed up at the *New Yorker* offices with a black eye and said the anti-rudeness campaign was over. **(laughter)**

His greatest personal gift was his enormous generosity to younger writers, and he not only helped you become yourself, he made you feel as though your "I" was a person worth having. My personal knowledge of him is restricted to letters and one accidental meeting that left me blushing and speechless because it is often embarrassing to put a sweet face to sweet generosity. In a way, thanking him here, in public, when he's no longer here, is easier than expressing my gratitude in a scene of greater intimacy. But, oh, I wish he were here so I could embarrass him again. Thank you.

**(applause)**

**SEAN KELLY:** I'm Sean Kelly, and I'm not dead, so I must be drunk. **(laughter)** This is a list I found today, I don't know if you'll recognize any of these titles. They're films. *Jake's Booty Call*. *Boobies*. *Fat Guy Nation*. *Dorm Daze*. No? Nothing? How about the pay-per-view television show *Strip Poker*? These are what the *Lampoon* has produced in the last ten years. All of these have been brought to you by the *National Lampoon*.

**(laughter)** I have looked them up on Wikipedia, and incidentally discovered I'm the only person associated with the *Lampoon* in any way who doesn't have his own Wikipedia page, but I don't mind.

In 1976 it's commonly understood that the *Lampoon* turned a corner and started heading downhill in 1975 when Henry and Doug moved on. In 1976, the magazine had had two off-Broadway hits, a widely syndicated radio show, the high school yearbook parody had sold a million copies, the magazine was selling a million copies a month, and the whole enterprise was hugely in debt, which was a feat of fiscal fuckery **(laughter)** that only the Bush/Cheney years can even come near. How this all came to pass—the publisher has written a book explaining that it was all my fault. I recommend his work to you. So in 1976 we published at the *Lampoon* a calendar, a best-of, a songbook, and a book of iron-ons. **(laughter)** In 1977 we did a book of French comics, a special called “Up Yourself,” a special called “Naked in the Nude” by Brian McConnachie, who sits here, a book called *A Bathroom Companion* and a best-of edition and a book called *The Book of Books* by Jeff Greenfield. Now, I know you think that Jeff Greenfield just appears on CBS on Sunday morning and says, “Time will tell,” but pundit Jeff Greenfield, yes, worked for

the *National Lampoon*, and he did this quite wonderful book called *The Book of Books*, but he also at the time, we decided we'd branch out three years late into television. This *Saturday Night Live* thing was starting to catch on, and we thought, "hey, there may be something in it."

Home Box Office was just getting started, and it was known, as you may remember, as Home Breast Office, because the big difference between Home Box Office and normal television was that it showed nay-nays. They decided they would like a television show from the *National Lampoon*, we said, "sure, we can do that," and we delivered a television show to them called *Disco Beaver from Outer Space*. **(laughter)** To begin with it was reasonably funny, and then Home Box Office got it and chopped it up into little pieces and pretended someone was changing channels or something—I don't know what their premise was. But in the end it's something of a hash, but once more Jeff Greenfield, pundit Jeff Greenfield, was one of the important contributors.

Because of Home Box Office's being Home Breast Office, Jeff wrote a thing called "The Breast Game," and the idea of "The Breast Game" was there were three young ladies standing behind a panel, and the questions—the answer to all the questions they would be asked would be "breasts," at which point they would open their shirts, so, for example, I just remembered these today, "A quotation from Restoration playwright William Congreve: 'Music must have charms to soothe the savage. . .'" **[buzzer noise]** Breasts! The treaty that ended the Russian-German War in 1918 was the Treaty of . . ." Brest-Litovsk! And I want you to think of that on Sunday morning—that's tomorrow—while

you're watching *CBS Sunday Morning*, I want you to think of Jeff Greenfield and when he comes on saying "Only time will tell," I want you to scream "Breast" at the top of your lungs. Thank you.

**(applause)**

**BRIAN MCCONNACHIE:** Good evening. Thank you. Thank you. My name is Brian McConnachie, and I was an editor, contributor to the *Lampoon* from the early seventies to the mid-seventies. And in that time, closer to the mid-, we got very ambitious and decided to a musical version of *Moby-Dick* starring John Belushi as Ahab. **(laughter)** In keeping with the notion "Let's put on a show," our senior copy editor, when she wasn't correcting the typos in our porn, **(laughter)** was a very accomplished pianist who wrote this wonderful music and we have himself, Sean Kelly, who did the lyrics, and Sean Kelly, if you don't know, is already an incarnation of Lorenz Hart, and I'd throw in W. S. Sullivan as well. Now, if you would, I'd like to play a segment, I'd like to play a song, a ballad, from *Moby*, sung by John Belushi. This is an expositional song in the plot, and please do pay attention—you can hardly miss it—but at the end the way he holds onto that note.

**(song plays)**

**(applause)**

Thank you, Sean. This next short piece is all you need to know is it's kind of fashioned after those—in *Reader's Digest* they'd have book condensations, so, this is one of those, and it's called "The Amazing Man They Call the Ding-Dong Hoodlum Priest."

It's been eighteen years since I've been in this church with Dan Mulrooney, and then it was to steal a statue of St. Joseph and to dress him up as a crossing guard, but I'm back because he's now Father Dan Mulrooney, saying his first Mass. It's hard to imagine "Dukes" Mulrooney, light-middleweight contender, as a man of the cloth. When that bell rang, he pounced like a cat and hit like a truck. But boxing leaves deep scars.

Father Mulrooney genuflected and descended the altar steps, holding the Host in what once were punishing hands. I recognized some of the older folks kneeling at the communion rail, their heads lifting back, their eyes blissfully closing, as Danny gently placed the Eucharist on their tongues. But just then the great bell in the tower bonged, and suddenly Danny didn't seem to be in church anymore. **(laughter)** He looked like he was back at Sunnyside Gardens. I can only guess what was going on in his head, when at the communion rail, Father Dan punched Mrs. Rodriguez right in the mouth, sending her sprawling back a good ten feet. Then Mr. Alvarez, kneeling next to her, caught a left cross that knocked out some of his teeth. Before Father Dan connected with an uppercut to Mrs. Milsh, two altar boys jumped on Danny's back, and two other priests wrestled him to the floor. As they struggled, I ran up to help. Most of the congregation had fled to hide in the rear of the church.

“Danny, look at me. You know me?” “Where am I?” he said. “You’re at Saint Bridget’s, Danny.” I pulled him to his feet. He seemed oddly calm. “Why is everyone at the back of the church?” he said. “They’re afraid you’ll slug ’em, Danny.” “Me? No. I want to say Mass, give out communion, and hear confessions.” And then he yelled, “Hey, come on back!”

We grew up in the projects during the tough times. The bra factory where most everyone worked had closed. No one had any money. Our mothers would give us shopping lists and send us to Keppelman’s to steal food. We’d load the groceries up and then break for the door. Keppelman hired bigger kids from other neighborhoods to stop us. I once saw Danny while holding five pounds of sirloin, two heads of romaine lettuce and bell peppers and three cans of Le Sueur peas, level four guys. Then this cop who was watching it came over. “You knocked out Crazy Brains McPhee, the Golden Gloves champ. Have you ever thought of boxing?” “Nah, boxing’s for nincompoops. You get your brains scrambled. I want to be a bra salesman or a bra designer. Basically something—some bra-related work.” “A lot of guys want that, Danny. The field is crowded with guys. Smart guys, college guys, guys who work for nothing. The bra business is a suckers’ game, Danny.” **(laughter)**

One day over in the railroad yards, Danny found a refrigerator car full of fresh avocados and artichokes. Somehow, he got it off the tracks and pulled it all the way home. When that same cop stopped him, “Hey, where do you think you’re going with that railroad car, Danny?” “Ah, lay off, willya? I’m not bothering nobody.” “I’ll give you a choice. You



can go to juvie jail, or you can go into the Golden Gloves.” “Can I design bras in the juvie jail?” **(laughter)** “No, nothing with bras.” “Okay, I’ll box then.”

It was the smart move. He was strong, and he had natural talent, and he went through opponents like a wrecking ball. At nineteen he turned pro. But Danny hated to work out. He had so much natural talent, he didn’t think he had to. “Danny, you gotta train,” his manager told him. “Later. I just got a great bra idea. Where’s my pencil?” His first few fights were against a bunch of palookas, and he won them easily. Then it got serious. “You’re fighting Frantic Marvin next, Delbert the Demented, and should you get by these two seriously hazardous individuals, there is Insane Nigel, who they actually keep in an insane asylum,” his manager warned. “You gotta get ready.” But Danny wouldn’t listen, and it caught up with him. He took some bad beatings, and after Danny’s severe whipping from Insane Nigel, who was himself taken away in a straitjacket, Father Doyle came to see him. He didn’t have to say anything.

“I know I’m through. What am I going to do, Father?” he asked. “Have you ever thought about becoming a priest?” “Ah, that’s for nincompoops and chumps.” “I’ll be frank, Danny, you can become a priest and try to do some good or you can wind up in the sewer, fighting alligators for scraps of food and probably getting your hand chewed off.” “Which hand?” Danny quietly lamented. “That one. The one you’re always drawing bras with.” **(laughter)** So Danny entered the priesthood. This time he worked hard and everyone was pulling for him—our Danny, a priest.

Back in church the congregation had slowly returned to the communion rail. I happened to glance at my watch and realized, if I was right, the noon bell was about to bong, and drowned out my screams of “No, Danny, wait!” This time it was all eighty-five pounds of Mrs. Torcelli who got flattened. As I saw this I thought I should probably hang around and warn that family scheduled for Father Dan’s three o’clock baptism that they might want to get some headgear for the baby. **(laughter)** Thank you very much.

**(applause)**

**MICHEL CHOQUETTE:** See, I saved seven seconds. Good. All right. I’m Michel Choquette, and maybe we could have some of those travel shots, maybe, so people can see what I’m talking about. Are they ready to go. Okay. That’s Billy Frick, or it was Billy Frick, because unfortunately Billy’s not with us anymore. I first heard about Billy through a friend who drew my attention to the fact that he played the role of Hitler in René Clément’s film, *Is Paris Burning?* He didn’t really have a speaking role, but he was more of a model, because he looked exactly like Hitler. He grew up in an acrobat family, he was German-Swiss, and at some point he discovered that he looked like Hitler if he put a moustache on. So, I mean, this was a natural, but then I had to sell the *Lampoon* on the idea of doing something with him. **(laughter)** So I mean, I thought, “Maybe I’ll put him in a Second Avenue deli or something, slicing pastrami,” I wanted something out of context, I didn’t want the usual, so then I thought, “Tropical island!” you know, from all those *Police Gazette* Hitler’s Still Alive things.

I chose an island, Martinique, and I found out even before I even left New York that I wasn't about to find any natural things like seashells and stuff, so I brought a bunch of seashells with me, and I also wanted some natives, so I bought a whole bunch of feathers at a theater supply shop here, and one funny thing I remember about that, was that when I went to buy the feathers, there was a woman, a cashier there, and she was allergic to feathers, but she'd been there for years, you know, I remember she was called Mandy, she'd been there since the forties, and they built this glass booth with air conditioning for her, because she was allergic to feathers, and you passed your money through a little wicket in there.

Anyway I went off to Martinique with loads of feathers and stuff and then I had to find some natives, of course. People come up to me, I remember at McGill University, I screened some of this stuff once, and somebody said, "oh, it's, you're really taking advantage of these natives there, laughing at them," but all these guys were taxi drivers, some of them were schoolteachers, some of them had never, ever climbed a coconut tree in their life, anyway. But anyway, we went around and shot this, and Billy Frick was great, he was a great sport and all that. One day we were shooting on a little island off Fort-de-France, a little tiny little island, and we were getting ready to shoot, we were actually in the shade, because it's quite hot and I just wanted Billy to rest. He was already seventy years old when he did this, by the way. And he'd dye his moustache and put a toupee, because he was already balding.

So I'm on this little island with a couple of my guys dressed as natives in these skins that we got by going to the local butcher shop a few days before and they weren't tanned, you know, they were so stiff the guys would walk around like that. And anyway, so I'm sitting there and Anne Beatts is with me, and I'm the one outside, and Anne is helping him with his makeup and all that kind of stuff, and two of my guys are with me and suddenly this little motorboat comes putt-putt-putt-putt and there's two sailors with little pompoms on, French sailors, and this very big potbellied guy, gray-haired, obviously a naval officer of some kind, you know, comes in here, sees me, long hair down to my ass, like that shot you saw there, with these guys with feathers sticking out of their heads, you know, and **[bluster of French]** and I said, "well, I'm taking photographs," "What kind of photographs?" I said, "I'm making with the *Oui, Lampoon, Playboy*," so he starts, "It's private here, it's private here. Get out of here!" It wasn't private at all, what it was was in addition to these two guys with pompoms, there was this girl, a blond girl in a bikini and it's obviously his girlfriend that he takes on that little island for picnics now and then, so he starts saying, "Get out of here."

And then Anne Beatts comes out and she's in a bikini, too, so my two guys are staring at this blond in the little boat and those two guys were staring up at Anne Beatts, you know, and I'm face-to-face with this guy, who later turned out to be an Admiral, and he starts saying "Get out of here, get out of here." Well, Billy picks up on this, he doesn't speak French, but he understands what's going on. He gets in full dress, he puts his jacket in, and he comes out here and he says **[bellows in German], (laughter)** and you don't believe this guy's reaction. I mean, he wasn't ready for that. He'd been through the war.

He had—I don't know if he was with that Vichy government, or which side, but he just was speechless.

And so anyway, finally, you know, he catches on, and that I'm doing this *Playboy Oui Lampoon* or whatever-it-is magazine and he said [**French phrase**], "I'm inviting you to the naval base tomorrow," he wanted to show off Hitler, his friend, in full regalia, and he did invite us. So next day Hitler and I show up completely dressed and applause from all this—it's very surreal, you know, we get drinks, and he pulls out some schnapps that he has in addition to wine and all that, and we have this celebration, and so we were heroes, but I always felt a little guilty after that about having made up this business about *Playboy, Oui, Lampoon*, you know. But later, after *Playboy* ran it, *Oui* picked it up in France, so I felt a little less guilty, because if he saw it there, maybe I hadn't lied to him that much. Okay.

**(applause)**

**TONY HENDRA:** Hi. Tonight, actually, we're going to attempt to do a musical number here tonight, which is from the *Lampoon's* first album, *Radio Dinner*, which I was lucky enough to coproduce with Michael O'Donoghue, and just a quick story about this thing. There were three parodies on this album, one of Bob Dylan, which a very talented young parodist called Christopher Guest performed, and one of Joan Baez, whose title I can't even mention here, and one of John Lennon, which was called, probably the most egregious, which was called "Magical Misery Tour," and these made quite a lot of noise

when the album was released, not all of it friendly, and Michael and I were always a little sort of vaguely worried that some drug-crazed fan would carry out, you know, a rock-and-roll fatwa on us.

And so about a month after the album came out, I was sitting in my office, and Donoghue appears in the doorway holding a cardboard box, and he said, “This was addressed to me, but I think it’s for both of us,” and he threw the box across the room onto my desk, and inside the box were nine sticks of dynamite—yes, real dynamite. I knew a little bit about dynamite because I was actually living in New Jersey at the time, **(laughter)** where we occasionally went fishing with it. **(laughter)** And I knew that actually normally, dynamite is actually quite safe, that without a blasting cap, it’s completely inert, but if it was old and crystalline, which this dynamite was, it is extremely inert. And it was really a miracle that the *Lampoon* had just not lost two of its criminally underpaid editors.

So anyway I—Donoghue seemed to be really sort of excited, almost possessive about this stuff, but I headed out of there as quickly as I could. And about half an hour later I came back, and the bomb squad had arrived with their big black machine to put the killer stuff safely away. So I went upstairs to the lobby and there surrounded by cops and camera was Michael O’Donoghue in attack mode, screaming, “That’s my fucking dynamite, you pigs. Give it back!” **(laughter)**

So anyway, the song—I can’t do any of the parodies for various reasons, but the song we’re going to do from *Radio Dinner* is the fourth one, which is called “Deteriorata,” and

“Deteriorata” started life as a parody of a poster called Desiderata, which some of you may remember. It was this sort of treacly treatise of life advice written in a kind of pseudo-antique English, and it was very popular at the gooier end of the hippie spectrum. Anyway, I did a parody of it, and Les Crane, he actually made a recording of the original “Desiderata,” so we did the same thing with “Deteriorata.” Paul, Melissa.

**(“Deteriorata”)**

**(applause)**

**CHRISTOPHER CERF:** Hi, I’m Chris Cerf, and I have an unusual job tonight in that I want to thank Rick for this opportunity to present a serious, perhaps an unwelcome, moment in an evening of levity, but as you probably remember the *Lampoon* occasionally took on a socially responsible cause. We felt it was important to let Americans know about things that they might not know about but could be really threatening to them. Henry Beard and I in particular cared desperately about a scourge we had noticed, that the Dutch were perfidious. **(laughter)**

We had a slide, I think. This was a poster that we prepared probably a good forty years ago now, and most of these things are still obvious to you. I’m sure you know the annual tulip scourge every spring is pretty bad, and you probably know about the hex signs that the Dutch are painting on our beautiful Pennsylvania barns. But these really are not the things that are most serious.

I want you to just think about some things. For example, the Dutch are cutting all our doors in half, **(laughter)** they are killing all our elm trees, and God knows what they bake in those ovens of theirs. In fact, you might not see how they do this, but I can show you if you put up the next slide please, we have a picture here of the Prohibition-era criminal Dutch Schultz, who actually was part of a crime wave where they carried out some of the things that I just told you about. You'll notice, for example, that Dutch is saying right there to this poor woman and her innocent child, "After I drill ya, I'm going to saw all your doors in half, kill all your elm trees," et cetera. So be warned. In fact, they don't call them the Low Countries for nothing. **(laughter)** So I would like to leave you with one important thought here, and basically that is we have to keep America out of Dutch and I actually have one other thought as well, which is that you know what Dutch treat is, don't you. It's no treat at all. Thank you for listening. Be vigilant.

**(applause)**

**JOHN WEIDMAN:** Hi. My name is John Weidman, and I was a member of the *Harvard Lampoon* with Doug and Henry. When we all found ourselves in New York following graduation I sort of stumbled into the first issue of the magazine with an off-color parody of Dr. Seuss. I stumbled around inside the magazine until I finally stumbled out a number of years later, although I would be hard-pressed to tell you exactly how many years those were. Back in the beginning it was my impression that the authorial impulse which fueled the vast majority of the magazine's contributors was a deep-seated



sense of injustice, fueled by the political and cultural landscape with which we were confronted, but also by seething inner demons which would have scared the shit out of Sigmund Freud himself.

But there was however one undeniable exception, and that was Gerry Sussman. Gerry's writing even when he had assumed the persona of his alter ego Bernie X, had a kind of goofy, chuckling, gentleness to it which was a perfect reflection of who the author was. In 1977 he wrote a parody of *TV Guide*. It contained the obligatory feature pieces and reviews, but most remarkable were the program listings. Last week I counted them and there were just under a thousand. They were all good, some of them were great, and what follows is a random sampling.

Monday morning, 6 a.m., Channel 2: *Cartoons from Africa*. **(laughter)** 6:30, Channel 2: *Cambridge Dons*: How to Fry a Banger. Channel 3: *Behind the Barn*. Channel 4: *Showering with Shapiro*: Bathing and Showering with Leon Shapiro. **(laughter)** 9:30 on Channel 2: *Dog Priests*: Bullets confesses to Father Bob that he participated in a live sex show. 9:30 on Channel 7: *The Bradley Bunch*. Ed Bradley and His Family. **(laughter)** 11:00 on Channel 7: *Back Door to Adventure*: Rex Reed narrates boys' adventure stories. **(laughter)** 11:30 on Channel 11: *NOVA*: "Cream Cheese and Bagels": Jewish scientists eat a light breakfast and boast of their accomplishments. **(laughter)** 1:00 p.m. on Channel 5: *Washington Bullshit*. **(laughter)** 1:30 on Channel 2: *The Junkies*: Buddy loses the fix money and nearly dies. **(laughter)** 2:30 on Channel 7, a movie, comedy, *Stingers* (1974): A young hitchhiker (Laurence Harvey) is befriended by a group of children who are very

tall for their age. With Jane Powell, 84 minutes. 3:00 on Channel 9: *The Zany Gray*

*Show:* Zany and his pals Mook and Kook throw things out of a 50-story window.

**(laughter)** 4:00 Channel 2: *Let's Eat Early:* **(laughter)** Winning ideas from Peg Bracken.

Channel 7: *The Old Couple:* Felix slips in the shower, and no one is there to help him.

**(laughter)** 4:30 on Channel 3: Movie, science fiction: *The Biggest Jew in the World*

**(laughter)** (1965) Little Hasidic Jew is lost near atomic testing ground in the West, but

becomes a mutant (Dustin Hoffman), **(laughter)** and destroys an entire restricted

retirement community. **(laughter)** 84 minutes.

5:30 Channel 3: *How's Your Ass?* Channel 7: *News with Martha Raye*, and Channel 12:

*Schmuck and Son.* 6:00 on Channel 13: *Reggie Jackson Makes Fudge.* 7:30 on Channel 7:

*Baseball from Britain.* 8:00 Channel 9, movie, mystery, *The Left-Handed Glove* (1947)

Director Byron Park's spine chilling tale of voodoo, witchcraft, drugs, and human beings

marinated to death in hot, peppery sauce. John Garfield gives one of his best

performances as a cigar wrapper with Raymond Massey in blackface. **(laughter)** 84

minutes. 9:30 on Channel 3: *Laverne on Shirley:* **(laughter)** Piggy and Pus-Lips hit the

ceiling when they peep through a hole in the Y locker room wall and see what Laverne's

doing to Shirley. 9:00, channel 7: *The Wonderful World of Woodys.* Why are people

named Woody so wonderful? Join host Hugh O'Brien in this fun-filled tribute to the most

memorable Woodys of our time: Woody Allen, Woody Guthrie, Woody Hayes, Woody

Herman, and Woody Woodpecker.

8:00 on Channel 7: *'alio Sailor:* Jacques Cousteau oversees documentary. Join Jacques

and the crew of the Calypso as they cruise the waterfront bars and bistros **(laughter)** from Marseilles to Mozambique in search of adventure and companionship. 10:00, Channel 9: Movie, comedy, action: *Big Balls and the Bear* (1981) Burt Reynolds plays Big Balls, a symphony conductor who quits his post to become a Southern redneck stock-car driver, only to discover that he likes conducting better. 10:30 Channel 2: *Budget Wrestling*. Channel 5: *Travel with the Stars*: Rose Marie and Maury Amsterdam go to Puerto Rico. **(laughter)** Channel 9: *The Baiting Game*: Girls tease boys until they come in their pants. **(laughter)** Channel 11: *Howdy, Cowboy*: Tall Tales of the Old West. 11:00, Channel 4: *People Named Keaton*: Diane Keaton discusses the films of Buster Keaton with guest star Michael Keaton. And finally, 11:00 on Channel 12: *Mary Tyler Whore*: **(laughter)** Mary thinks she's being fired because her boss, Madam Ovary, doesn't smile at her for days. It turns out the boss has a new set of false teeth that she's ashamed of.

Like I said, Gerry generated a thousand of these, and I didn't pick the best fifty-five. It was an astonishing accomplishment, and it was a talent he had that I don't think that any of the rest of us could have duplicated, and I miss him.

**(applause)**

**RICK MEYEROWITZ:** Hi, hi, hi. Thank you. I'm Rick Meyerowitz—that's Ted Mann, I don't know why I put on my glasses. **(laughter)** I have nothing to read, so I'll take them off again. I'm here to introduce a video clip by Ted Mann. Ted lives in LA,

actually in Studio City. Befitting his precarious existence, he lives in a precarious house on the side of a precarious cliff. I asked Ted to come to New York and be part of this evening, and he said “no way,” but he said, “I can make a video and send it to you,” and being that Ted has a long career, a thirty-year career now producing TV programs and movie and writing for television and movies and doing and even acting in—you may have noticed him being murdered in an episode of *Deadwood*—it’s possible. And so I thought Ted had some skill, and I said, “Ted, this would be a wonderful thing, if you could send a video with the thoughts you wanted to convey, and we will happily give it to them to show, and I know the Library’s very skilled at this kind of thing, and Ted did send a video, and it is the crappiest video in the world, I think he set his camera on top of a bookshelf, and I think indeed he says so. And so we are going to show that video and probably we touched it up just a little bit to try to get it to work for you, but let’s show that right now.

**TED MANN ON VIDEO:** I got it. Rick asked me to say something, and I promised I would. I’m not comfortable doing it particularly. I think I know now how a blogger must feel, because I’m talking to myself with a camera teetering on a speaker on top of the desk three feet away, but I wanted to talk about something in particular—a seasonal something that happened it must be over thirty years ago. And it was the *National Lampoon* Christmas or Hanukkah party, holiday party, if you will. One of those parties where gifts are exchanged by prearrangement; people are assigned a name, and they must purchase a gift, wrap it up, and give it to someone, very simple, and I got Pachovsky, and I gave him a billiard table or something. And I forget what I got, it was no consequence,

no mystery there, John Weidman got a bar of ex-lax and with it was a note that said, because you can't write for shit. That wasn't up to *Lampoon* standards, if you will, and John was a little irate at receiving a gift from someone that was worked with every day, a friend and a colleague, it wasn't that funny, and no one would admit to having given it. And I think that John asked everybody who was there.

Now, there are some people who have gone beyond our jurisdiction, gone beyond forever the reach of royalty checks, but I have reason to believe that the person who gave that gift and wrote that note is someone that is still with us, and here tonight, and I think after thirty years it would be nice to give him the opportunity to admit what they did, and to apologize to John, to their colleagues, and perhaps get the weight of this injury done to a fellow human being off their conscience, even if they've forgotten. So I'm going to give that person the chance now to stand up and say, "It was me, I am sorry."

We all go through troubled patches in our lives, I think we can all get behind that. I know I can, and I certainly done things that I'm very ashamed of, and we'll go into those at the next reunion, but for now, why don't you stand up and apologize? This is your chance, before I say your name in front of all these people. Stand up and apologize to John and to your colleagues. Well? Rick, I know I promised I wouldn't do this, but I'm going to have to say the name, one last chance to stand up and admit to giving John the ex-lax and the note that said, "because you can't write for shit." Will you do it? Are you man enough to do it? Will you stand up? **(laughter)** Well, thank you very much, and it was a pleasure to be here and clear up this thirty-year-old mystery with you all tonight, and I hope we'll see

each other again soon.

**(applause)**

**RICK MEYEROWITZ:** We touched it a little bit. It turns out John can write for shit. Just ask Stephen Sondheim. Now I have paper and I don't have my glasses, so maybe I should put it on. I want to take this opportunity to thank Paul for his endless introduction **(laughter)**—I don't know, Paul, we were so concerned about time, I don't know if the entire show since your talk has equaled your introduction or was as funny as your introduction. I want to thank Meg, who's done amazing work as producer of this event, and the library itself, although the library itself probably wouldn't answer me if I said thank you.

Paul asked me not to have anybody here tonight who would deliver a didactic speech from the podium, and I tried to adhere to that request, but then I thought, well, maybe I'll deliver a didactic speech. So what I'm going to tell you is a little bit about what the *National Lampoon* was, just run through a quick history, I only have twenty pages or so. The *National Lampoon* was a literary enterprise. It was a cultural touchstone. It was an innovator in the use of art and it was funny as hell. But more than that it was smart as hell, as provocative as hell, and even as prescient as hell. If the magazine had a point of view, it was that everybody and everything was fair game. Right-wing lunatics, tie-dyed peaceniks, and tedious nudniks all were offended by the *Lampoon's* stick-in-the-eye sense of humor.

I'm going to outline a brief rise and fall of the *National Lampoon* for you, and it ain't funny. In July of 1969, at the same time that NASA launched three men to the moon, Henry Beard, Harvard '67, Doug Kenney, Harvard '68, and Rob Hoffman, Harvard '69 arrived in New York to launch a national humor magazine. They were prodigies of kind who made other prodigies appear incompetent. At the *Harvard Lampoon* they had edited parodies of *Time* and *Life* magazine that sold really well and were distributed nationally. This gave them the notion that maybe they could try a national humor magazine.

They formed a partnership with a publisher here in New York. They consulted experts who counseled caution or advised them to drop the whole business. They acquired a commune of underground art directors, they hired a staff, and drew to them likeminded, almost equally brilliant writers and artists who all wanted to change the world or blow it up or both. And somehow in April 1970 they published the first issue of a magazine called *National Lampoon*.

The *Lampoon* was an electric place to work. A visit to the office—and I was a freelancer, so I visited the office, I didn't work there—but I went there once or twice a week because it was like a drug, a good drug. It was an electric place to work. A visit to the office was never less than exhilarating. The place had the feel of a rogue enterprise. The competition to top each other up there was fierce, and it still is, as you can probably tell from this evening. I swear you could feel the energy in the air and hear the synapses of some of the funniest minds of that generation firing like broadsides from a pirate ship. Editorial

meetings were always comedy slam insult fests, a humor decathlon that energized everyone that played a part in it.

That kind of thing can wear you out. After five years, Doug, Henry, and Rob were no longer young. They were instead, on average, twenty-eight years old. So they cashed out. They took their scads of money, and they ran in different directions. As for *National Lampoon*, with the arrival of *Saturday Night Live* in 1975, which was staffed with writers and actors from the magazine, the *National Lampoon* began to lose its grip on its audience. *Animal House* in 1978 was probably the *Lampoon*'s last significant contribution to the culture. And bright and talented editors and contributors kept the magazine afloat for a few more years, 1980, maybe a little longer, but then they began to disperse to the ends of the comedy earth, by which I mean probably Los Angeles. They worked in movies, they worked in television, and some published books and some wrote some pretty good plays, yet aside from the founders, their names are not well known.

And that is one of the reasons that I made this book, and I did not write this book. If you—by the way—if you buy one of these books, and there's a big stack of them over there, you will see that what I really did is curate this book. It's a selection of—maybe it's a 320-page best issue of the magazine ever, and anyway those of us fortunate enough to still be breathing will tell you that the work we did for the *National Lampoon* will probably be our most important contribution to whatever culture will have it. We were lucky to have been part of such a funny and exhilarating enterprise, as silly as it was sometimes, as serious a business as it could be, it was for many of us the best work that



we've ever done.

I'd like to tell you that the *Lampoon* looked great because it had exceptional art directors, beginning with Michael Gross, who had the insight that in order for a parody to work, it had to look exactly like the thing it was parodying. David Kaestle worked with Michael and designed many of the *Lampoon*'s special projects, such as the yearbook. David's talent, intelligence, and advice, was respected by all his peers and friends. And we count ourselves lucky to have worked with him. Peter Kleinman, who boxed under the name the Kosher Butcher directed the magazine for almost eight years. Two terms. He served two terms. Nobody learned things as fast as Peter. Nobody had to learn things as fast as Peter. Peter's in the audience tonight. Peter, where are you? Stand up and hit someone. I know you're here. He doesn't want to stand up.

I'd like to say a word about the women of the *National Lampoon*, and that is there were never enough of them. But some are here tonight and I'd like them to stand up, and I have a feeling nobody's going to stand up. It's like Ted's video. A lot of the *Lampoon*'s artists and contributors who aren't speaking are in the audience. I know you're here, even though I can't see you. Maybe everyone who was associated with the *Lampoon* at some point except for the speakers could stand up and we can see who you are.

**(laughter)** Sam, can you stand up? Ron Barrett, Politeness Man, Ed Subitzky, the great Sam Gross, Stan, Mack, Jerry Taylor and Mike Reese, and over there Bob Grossman, and—and—and we have three widows. The title of the book: Drunk, Stoned, Brilliant,

Dead. We have three widows in the audience. Lorraine Rodriguez, wife of the wonderful Charlie Rodriguez, Elaine Louie, wife of Gerry Sussman, whose *TV Guide* you just saw, and Louisa Grassi, wife of David Kaestle. All right. That's it for me. I'm leaving.

**(applause)**

**FRED GRAVER:** So this is perfect. This is perfect. This is just what it was like when I got to the magazine. Right? You've seen Tony, you've seen Sean, you've seen John Weidman, they've read Gerry Sussman's work, George Carlin was at the beginning, and by the time I got to the magazine it was much like the way you're feeling now, which is "Really? We're still doing this?" Right? And that's what it was like. And the thing is that Doug Kenney—I've tried to express to people how huge Doug Kenney's influence was and the best way I can think of is he was the Mark Zuckerberg of comedy; it changed everything and he understood the way that Mark Zuckerberg did that there would be a golden time for him and the magazine when it would be cool and then he got out and then it wasn't so cool anymore, and by the time I got there what was left of the cool is pretty much what's left on your foot when you leave the bathroom—there might be a little toilet paper there, and eventually somebody will find it and throw it away and walk off and that was that. And by the time I got there, the reason I got there, the two guys who I replaced, one of whom I think is here tonight. Literally did what every writer in the world ever wants to do. They were being paid to write a piece. They got a call. They left the piece right in the Selectric, and they said, "We're going to Hollywood." We're going to write *Airplane!* Actually it was *Airplane 2* actually that they got hired to write and that was

kind of the beginning of the defections.

I was editing humor books at the time, and I was editing one with Gerry Sussman, so what you heard of his work here doing the *TV Guide*, I had hired him to do a parody of Learning Annex catalogs, which I did and it was fabulous, and I think of him every morning, because one of the courses in the Learning Annex catalog was how to shower and he celebrated the genital area as the major soaping zone and every morning I think of Gerry. And he offered me a job because I could edit and I could edit punctuation and I could rearrange paragraphs and things like that and these were things that nobody was interested in at the *Lampoon*. I got there and there was some of the vestiges of the old *Lampoon*—Sean was there, Ted Mann, John Weidman, our host Rick Meyerowitz, and there were lots of the new boys, a lot of the boys from Harvard, who had all gotten the memo about the world of comedy, and it's the same memo that Ben Hecht in the '40s sent from Los Angeles to Charles MacArthur, which was "There are barrels of money and your only competition is idiots," and that was the way the Harvard boys looked at the entertainment industry.

Right after I was hired, Gerry Sussman decided to leave his role as editor in chief. And I vaguely believe that Sean was offered the job, and we were out drinking and he was kind of saying, "I don't want to take this job, I don't want to do it. Who would ever want to do it?" And I suggested that we create a fictional editor and this was the birth of L. Dennis Plunkett and it fell to me to answer the phone as L. Dennis, to correspond as L. Dennis, to make restaurant reservations as L. Dennis and the back-story in my mind is that L.

Dennis (and all I did was clench my jaw when I answered the phone), L. Dennis was one of those new comedy professionals who were coming along, and he was a careerist, and he'd lots of job offers, you know, "I was going to work at *Rolling Stone*. I was going to work for Lorne. I was going to revive *Ramparts*." It wasn't clear whether or not he was from Harvard. In my mind if you had mentioned Harvard in the room when L. Dennis was there, he would leave the room mysteriously, kind of like *Skull and Bones*, I can't have that conversation with you.

And he would answer the phone, and people would call, because he was on the masthead, and they would need to speak to L. Dennis Plunkett and I would get on and go, "Hello, freak!" that was his greeting, I don't know why, and then they would ask for things, and it was ad sales calling or it was people with submissions, and I would say, "That's great, I need you to speak to this guy Graver, and he's going to take care of that with you. But here, I need your help. I think I'm going to fire Graver. Keep me in the loop. I need to know what he's like and what happens," and then I would call, oblivious to the fact that L. Dennis was going to fire me, and waiting for the person who wanted to speak to L. Dennis because they were unhappy with my work.

So there's another part of the L. Dennis legend, and I've never told anybody about this, and Rick asked me to talk about this. Coincidental with the time I was at the *Lampoon*, I was having kind of a rough time in my life, and for two months I lived in the *Nat Lamp* offices on Madison Avenue, and showered in the executive showers and slept in the conference room and every night I would come in at one, two in the morning, and there

was the night watchman, and I would bring him a cup of coffee, and I would sign in as L. Dennis, and I figured if I ever got caught I could just say, no, it wasn't me, it was L.

Dennis

And I always imagined, because it was the kind of end days of the magazine, and I always had hoped and imagined that L. Dennis would write the final editorial for the magazine, and that he would celebrate what it had done and how it was kind of a dead relic, but that we would meet again on *Saturday Night Live*, or on Letterman, or in the movies, on TV, and then I would sign it, L. Dennis Fuckit, and that would be it. But then the whole staff was summarily dismissed one day and we were told that we had to get out that afternoon and so I took that Selectric that those two guys had left their manuscript in years ago and I shoved it through the wall in my office, it was just cheap gypsum, and the Selectric hung there, between my office and Kevin Curran's, and it just slammed there, and I remember Kevin Curran coming into my office, like "What the hell did you do?" And at that moment I kind of spoke the final editorial for the *National Lampoon* in the voice of L. Dennis and I looked at Kevin and said, "Well, you could have seen that coming." Thank you.

**(applause)**

**LARRY "RATSO" SLOMAN:** I'm Larry "Ratso" Sloman and I took over as executive editor after the great purge of 1984. One of the things that I really wanted to do at first was to bring back a lot of the old great writers and illustrators and cartoonists who had

strayed from the flock—people like Gerry Sussman, Ed Subitzky, Ed Bluestone, Rick Meyerowitz, of course. I made Sam Gross the cartoon editor. But I also wanted to bring in some, you know, people who had never contributed to the *National Lampoon* before, but who I thought were great writers: Paul Krasner, John Waters, John Kehoe, Richard Belzer, Charles Bukowski, Tuli Kupferberg, and the most challenging person I've ever worked with, the great comedian Gilbert Gottfried. Now, there were two perquisites to get Gilbert to do something for the *Lampoon*. One was to feed him because he was extremely cheap, and the other one was to surround him with beautiful naked women and put him in photo funnies, because Gilbert of course if you look at him, he couldn't get any nookie, ever.

So I would take him out to lunch. I would submit the expenses. This went on for a long time. I'd say, "Gilbert, how's the piece coming?" I'm working on it! I'm working on it! Finally the publisher calls me and then says, "You can't keep on spending money on this Gilbert." So I hatched another scheme. Henny Youngman I got to do some stuff for us, and Henny Youngman had a table at the Carnegie Deli where Leo Steiner, who owned the Carnegie Deli, would let Henny bring any friends of his and eat there for free. So I would have Gilbert piggyback on this, and we could come and go to the Carnegie Deli and we would sit down. They were unpleasant lunches, because Henny off the stage was not a particularly funny guy, and we would basically sit there and Gilbert would go, knowing it was free would go, "I can't decide. Corned beef or pastrami? I'll order them both," so he would eat one sandwich there, and take one home for dinner. And then of course it got ugly because at the end of the day there was no check, but Henny would say,

“everybody put in a dollar for a tip!” So there were five of us there, we’d put in five dollars, five single dollar bills, we’d put it on the table, the waiter would come over and he said, “Five dollars, fuck you, Henny, you cheap bastard, I can’t live on this.” “Fuck you! You’re a bad waiter.” It was horrible.

Anyway, I finally persuaded Gilbert to do something, because, you know, I guess he didn’t have the concentrated attention span, so I came up with the idea of having Gilbert do list pieces, they would reach a short little—fifty things . . . Gilbert finally did one, I’m going to read a little bit from it. It’s the fifty things to say when you can’t achieve an erection. “I’m sorry. I can’t stop thinking about Alan & Rossi. No spikka the English. Stop looking at me. I can’t do anything with you looking at me. Goddamn Qaddafi. First the Hindenburg and now this.” And, “Hard-on. Who said anything about a hard-on?”

So he did the piece and now of course we had to get him into a photo funny so he could see naked girls. We did one piece that Peter art-directed called “The Crucifixion and the Single Man, or how to nail a broad after you’ve been nailed to a board.” I don’t know how Peter did it, but he got an eight-foot cross, and we tied Gilbert to the cross in a gold lame cross and a crown of thorns. And different panels. And one panel that was a particularly grueling panel was we had a semiclad girl on the bed and placed Gilbert tied to the cross on top of her and, you know, the photographer took a quick picture, because, you know, he didn’t want to kill this girl, and all of a sudden Gilbert looks up and says, “I think I broke character! Could we do fifteen more takes?” and he made us.

The most controversial piece Gilbert ever did for us it was a piece—he got a job opening up for Belinda Carlisle of the Go-Gos, who was going on a solo career, and he was going to be the standup comedian before she would come on, and her manager came to him and said, “Gilbert, There are a lot of young girls here with their parents, so please try to work clean.” That’s all he needed. So I’m going to read Gilbert’s great piece. “Gilbert Gottfried presents: Seven jokes give or take one or two that you must never tell when you open for Belinda Carlisle but I did.” So just imagine a little Jew squinting—“Why are a woman’s pussy and asshole so close together? So you can carry her like a six-pack. Three fags are in a hot tub. All of a sudden a big blob of semen floats to the top. One fag yells out to the other two, ‘OK, who farted?’ What do you get when you cross a rooster with a telephone pole? A fifty-foot cock that reaches out and touches someone. A man walks into a doctor’s office. The doctor examines him and finds out he has five penises. The doctor screams, ‘That’s amazing! How do your pants fit?’ The man says, Like a glove! ‘Dad, I got my first blowjob today.’ ‘How was it, son?’ ‘Tasted awful.’ A Polish man walks home to wife carrying a steaming pile of dogshit and says, ‘Look what I almost stepped it!’ What’s pink and red and climbs up a woman’s leg? A homesick abortion.”

Thank you, Gilbert, thank you, Rick.

**(applause)**

**PAUL JACOBS:** This is a communist manifesto, basically, as a Temptations song that I wrote with Tony for *Lemmings*. I recently was contacted by ASCAP and I thought they were hitting me up for money. It turned out they had polled congresspeople to find out



what their favorite songs were. They asked Zoe Lofgren from California, she did not pick “Satisfaction” or “People.” She picked “Papa Was a Running-Dog Lackey of the Bourgeoisie.” I sent her a lead sheet with a note and expecting one back from her. We can clap on two and four if you’re nonwhite.

**(“Papa was a Running-Dog Lackey of the Bourgeoisie”)**

**PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER:** Rick, could you kindly give them the longest conclusion now, please.

**RICK MEYEROWITZ:** I’d like to invite everybody who was onstage to come back onstage, if you can still climb back on to the stage. It would be great to have us all here. Somebody might want to take a picture. Michelle!

**PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER:** I would like to particularly thank the talent that has come tonight to make the *National Lampoon* live again and of course most particularly Rick Meyerowitz.

**(applause)**

**RICK MEYEROWITZ:** Thank you, Paul. Thank you, everybody. We’re going to be signing books at the table. We’re going to have a long line, conga line, of editors and writers sitting there, we’re all going to autograph the book I thank you all for coming

tonight, and I thank you, Paul.

**PAUL HOLDENGRÄBER:** Thank you all very much, everybody. Good night!

**(applause)**