

## Monday's Commentary

## 'Professional adventurers' must be odd folks

Let me introduce you to Lt. Col. Robert K. Brown. You may not like him, but don't worry — it won't hurt his feelings.

Brown is the founder, editor and publisher of a national magazine called *Soldier of Fortune*, or *SOF* as it refers to itself. This, folks, is no *Time* or *Newsweek*.

It is subtitled "The Journal of Professional Adventurers." It is about war.

"We've had people say it was a horrible magazine because they didn't like the orientation of the magazine. I say tough s—," said Brown in a telephone interview from the Boulder, Col., magazine headquarters.

"I just felt for a long time that there was really no solid adventure magazine on the market, that 'true and Argosy' were rather tame," he said. He said he had a "gut feeling" a market existed for such a magazine. This is perhaps an unfortunate choice of words, considering the nature of the publication, but more on that later.

SO FOUR years ago, with only mail-order book-selling as a publishing background, Brown started *SOF* with a paid subscription list of 4,400. He says circulation is now about 110,000 and he figures it will continue to grow to "at least a quarter million." The magazine is published monthly.

Brown figures military personnel and old vets comprise most of his readers. While the magazine runs frequent stories about mercenaries — an interview in the June issue centers on a Briton who served under the infamous, executed Col. Callan in

Angola — Brown figures actual mercenaries among his readers are in "a very small number."

"But the thing is, people like to read about them. It's got a certain, at least in the eyes of certain numbers of people, glamorous aspect."

Brown's gut feelings about the market were obviously right, but they were helped along by Larry Flynt, the publisher of *Hustler* magazine.

Nowadays, Flynt has to content himself with making high-performance modifications to his wheelchair — he was gunned down and paralyzed below the waist last year as he prepared to enter a Georgia courtroom to stand trial on obscenity charges. But it wasn't always thus.

Hustler publishes what nearly anybody would call rather revealing photographs of women, hermaphrodites and other living things. Flynt thinks *Hustler* is okay. He thinks *SOF* is obscene. To prove it, he printed and mass distributed a photograph lifted from *SOF*. It was rather revealing itself.

It was a close-up of an African with a hole the size of a subway tunnel where the left half of his forehead should have been. He was identified as a Rhodesian assassinated by terrorists.

If you missed the picture you're still not too late. You can buy a wall poster of it for \$2.95 through the magazine. If \$2.95 is too rich for your blood, you can get "Nazi Secret Weapon Art Posters" at two bucks even.

YOU CAN buy a lot of other things advertised in the magazine, too. Your everyday guns, your knives, your kits to turn your AR-15 rifle into a full-auto-



Mike Scanlon

matic weapon, your blow guns, your copies of *How To Kill*, Volumes 1, 2 and 3, your various implements of destruction comprise most of the advertising content.

In the classified section of the June issue you will find something called *Loompanics* from Mason, Mich., offering to the public information on the location of uninhabited islands. *Loompanics* asks the musical question, "Need a place to hide out? Or a quiet staging area for clandestine operations?"

It's all enough to give Lee Harvey Oswald a wet dream, but surprisingly, Brown reports no trouble from the government.

"Other than the fact that they've questioned me about recruiting," said Brown, 46. He is talking about mercenaries. "We print information, we do not recruit. I know what the law is and I follow it."

THE EDITORIAL content of the magazine isn't anywhere near as lurid as the advertisements. In

the June issue, for instance, a story appears that may interest you even if killing isn't your hobby. It's about contingents of the U.S. armed forces who, equipped with captured Soviet equipment, duplicate Russian tactics in war games.

Brown says he was in the army — that's the U.S. Army, by the way — during two separate stints, the first in the '50s, the second from December 1967 to 1970. Fourteen months of that second tour were spent in Vietnam, including a spell as captain of a Special Forces "A Team," or 12-man operational group.

He got out, he says, because he isn't "a peacetime soldier," although he is now a lieutenant colonel, both in the Army Reserve and in the staff box in the magazine.

HE HAS never worked as a mercenary himself, but as for the future, "one never knows."

"I've been involved in some anti-Castro operations. Also, in 1966 I was what I would call a peripheral observer of an attempted invasion of Haiti. But I wasn't paid."

He defines the magazine's view as "militant conservative." And that, if you were curious, means "we get out and do, if you would."

"Two people on the staff I would characterize as people who go and do" are — or were — George Bacon and Mike Echanis.

Bacon was killed in Angola. Echanis was killed in Nicaragua.

Brown didn't say what side they happened to be on.

## Tinkering Around

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

## Love (sigh) dies in films

All the world doesn't love a lover. At least Hollywood seems to think so. They've done their best to ruin a whole genre of films — the love story.

I'm not talking about the film that told America "Love means never having to say you're sorry." I'm talking about films which portrayed love as a dignified emotion instead of a terminal rotting of the brain cells.

And I blame the latter on Eleanor of Aquitaine.

That's going to take some explaining since Eleanor died in 1204 at about the age of 72. Eleanor, who started out in life with the nickname *Damsel of Britany*, is usually credited by historians with being responsible for inventing courtly love.

This is not to be confused with the emotion one has in mind when one says, "I love my mother, my father, my friend" or even "I love my husband," albeit there is a difference in how you love these persons.

Eleanor's brand schlepped its way through history to manifest itself in the old-fashioned, three-hanky weeper film and the nonsense about Mr. Right that used to be fed to adolescent girls.

In the 10th century, the conventions of courtly love were part of the civilizing veneer used by the upper class to keep itself within the bare confines of organized society.

COURTLY LOVE was invented in part to keep the lords from beating the daylight out of their ladies. By putting upper class women on a pedestal, Eleanor managed to keep upper class men from treating them like hunting dogs.

Unfortunately, this custom didn't filter downward to the peasants. In Chaucer's England, there was a law which made it illegal for a man to beat his wife — if he continued to do so after she passed into a coma.

But Eleanor knew whereof she spoke. In 1137, when she became duchess of Aquitaine, she was married off to Louis VII of France. She was about 15 years old at the time. Tiring of Louis, she divorced him in 1152. That same year, she married Henry of Anjou, who became Henry II of England. He in

turn, cheated on her in later life. But then, courtly love was based on cheating, too. You had wives you married for convenience and ignored and loved you revered but never really shared any real relationship.

So from what a medieval poet once called "love's sweet exchange and barter," we come to love's insane whimpering in modern film.

Part of the reason for that is filmmakers are dealing with an out-of-date concept, courtly love. Another reason, I suspect, is that romantic movies aren't boffo at the box office.

IF THEY WERE MORE profitable, filmdom's powers that be would spend more money on them.

But romantic movies just aren't that attractive to general audiences. Of the top 50 movies as of 1978, only seven of them were romances and that includes "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" by Walt Disney.

"Gone with the Wind," "Love Story," "Dr. Zhivago," "My Fair Lady," "Fanny Hill" and "The Way We Were" were among the top 50 movie makers.

They just aren't making movies like those with Tracy and Hepburn. "Casablanca," of course, is a romantic mixture of wartime propaganda and a man meets woman.

Instead of good romances, we end up with something like "The Promise" which looked promising but failed miserably. The story revolves around the old plot of boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl. Tradition is such a reassuring thing.

But unlike Rick and Ilsa in *Casablanca* or any of the characters Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy played, the lovers in "The Promise" can be easily capsulized — he was a nerd and she was wispy-washy. The match of persons with the character traits of a wet dish rag is horribly uninteresting.

NO WONDER romance is out of fashion with Detroit area movie-goers. The closest movies have come to a realistic view of two persons getting to know each other is in "An Unmarried Woman," and that turned into a mod-

ern Cinderella story. Six weeks after the woman's divorce, she meets a man who not only is sensitive, intelligent and almost non-chauvinistic but also good-looking. She even has a fairy godmother in the person of her psychiatrist.

People who help advertise the movies to Detroit audiences say that romance, even the fairy-tale variety, isn't what Motor City audiences want.

"Up in Smoke," "Animal House" and "Love at First Bite" are doing well at the box offices in the area, according to one advertising agency.

They're doing well because the movie-going crowd of 14-18-year-olds likes to see movies between two 10-miles — each.

Most of the movies are pitched to the 18-24-year-olds in the audience, according to Mark Bladd, publisher for the Southfield office of United Artists-MGM.

THEY WANT TO SEE action, comedy and drama. Romance is fine if its incidental. Women, it seems, are best when accessories to the chic man's wardrobe, a la James Bond.

"Slow Dancing in the Big City," a story of the romance between a big city newspaper columnist and a ballerina did well in New York and Los Angeles. It did a slow dance in the box offices of Detroit, according to one publicist.

"Dawn of the Dead," a science fiction horror thriller is doing very well in Detroit. Marauding corpses are evidently more interesting than the pursuit of love and happiness.

"Your basic movie-goeer between 18 and 24 years old isn't geared to that type of film," said Bladd. "They don't do well unless the movie is exceptionally well done," another publicist said.

"It really has to be pretty good and not too schlocky."

The next romantic epic to hit the silver screen will be "Voices," the story star who loves her.

Hollywood and the people who brought you "Hair," 10 years too late, will never learn.

## From our readers

## Reader rejects government housing

Editor:

Your paper ran a comprehensive report supporting state and federally funded housing. However, I feel in fairness to all concerned, the facts that substantiate the opposing point of view should also be printed. Some of these facts are as follows:

• Westland's development is fulfilling a service to that community because enough of its own residents need such housing to fill its units. Farmington Hills, on the other hand, by its own

counsel's admission, will be compelled to import tenants from other areas.

• That project was built among multiple family units, namely condominiums. The proposed Farmington Hills project will be set among single family homes valued up to \$180,000. If you were to build a house of that value, would it be reasonable for you to select a site next to a public housing project? I think not, neither is the reverse reasonable.

• Objectionable tenants cannot be evicted by the manager of such units, not by any other local authority. But evictions must come through the state or federal agencies, who may be reluctant to evict such tenants because of the impossibility of placing them elsewhere. Thus forcing the elderly trapped in such housing to live under some deplorable conditions. Surely, I need not cite an example.

Herman Gardens is an existing, unavoidable fact. Proponents of federal or state funded housing cannot simply point to Westland. That complex is not old enough to have withstood the evolution of change and the many convolutions of government agencies.

It is not good enough to switch from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, that is only changing the name of the rose and a rose by any other name

This paper also deemed it within its prerogative to call those residents in Farmington Hills who regard these facts as cause to be cautious in regard to federal or state funding for housing as screamers. In fact, they are reasonable people whose main concern in their campaign is to give the people — for or against — the right to vote.

I suggest you cure an apoplexy. CLAUDEAN KESSLER, Farmington Hills

## Scherrer tie is denied

Editor:

I, Cindy Andrews, didn't state I lived with P. Scott Scherrer or have any knowledge of relatives acting as investors with P. Scott Scherrer. I certainly hope this will clarify any misgivings

your reporter had assumed from comments made at Mr. Scherrer's pre-trial hearing on Friday, April 20.

CINDY ANDREWS, Southfield

## Hills women's club support libraries

Editor:

On Tuesday, May 8, a special election will be held in Farmington and Farmington Hills to re-establish the Farmington Community Library as a district library for a district including both cities.

There are two proposals on the ballot. Proposal A, if passed, would redefine the legal status of the Farmington Community Library so that it may conform to an amended district library law passed by the state legislature in

1978. This proposal constitutes a technical change in library authority; library services will be maintained and library board members will continue to be appointed by both city councils.

Proposal B provides for the transfer of revenue authority from both city councils to the library authority. Passage of this proposal would give the board of trustees of the library the authority to levy necessary tax to provide for the operation of the library up to a maximum 1 1/4 mills on each dollar assessed property value.

The library is currently operating at a millage rate of 1.1 mills and the library board projects this rate for the next several years. Upon passage of the proposal, the city councils will reduce the city budgets for libraries by 1.1 mills and this amount would be transferred to the library authority.

The members of the Farmington Hills Junior Women's Club want to urge all eligible voters to vote in favor of these library proposals.

SANDRA DONLON, Farmington Hills

## Women-center lauds article

Editor:

We would like to commend you for the high standard of openness your paper exemplified in the printing of Lynn Orr's article on Bonnie Swadlow's sex discrimination suit, released in the April 18 edition of the Farmington Observer.

We recognize the resoluteness this publishing represents in directly coming up against the political powers that be in this city. Unfortunately, for them there is no argument for truth, and Ms. Orr's article pointedly demands explanation from certain Farmington Hills officials.

We thank you and hope the quality of such work continues to set precedence in your paper.

SUSAN BUSHER, OOC Womencenter

## READERS' FORUM

Letters must be original copies and contain the signature and address of the sender. Limit letters to 300 words.

## Hillel enjoys Passover story

Editor:

I just want to thank you again for the wonderful article about Hillel Day School and our observance of the Jewish Holiday of Passover.

I've received numerous comments from the school, the children and their parents, plus from residents of the Farmington area regarding the informative and well-written article by Louise Okrutsky.

Your photographer, Harry Mauthe, did a fine job capturing the excitement on our students' faces as they participated in our traditional seder.

All of us really do appreciate the super support that you and your staff on the Farmington Observer have given to Hillel Day School. May we have continued success together.

SUSAN FRIEDMAN, Publicity chairman, Hillel Day School

## Senior housing in community is solution

Editor:

Every community needs a well thought-out program for the care of the senior citizens since each person in that community will become a senior citizen, God willing. The alternative to getting old is not very appealing.

The solution to many problems out elderly face can be solved by adequate housing as close as possible to the community setting. Europe is far ahead of this country in the elderly. They have long ago embarked on humane solutions to these community problems.

Unless we change our bias it will be reflected in what we can expect for ourselves as we get old.

Each society must have a well-balanced mixture of all ages. This improves everyone's growth, especially the growth of the young of that society.

If we handle poorly the problems of our aging population because we fear growing old ourselves, we will face our own aging with sorrow and antagonism. One life has value as long as one attributes value to the life of others through friendship, love and compassion.

Changing the family scene where grandparents, parents and children no longer live in the same neighborhood, where special interests prevent caring for the older members of the family cannot be accomplished by legislation. The necessary changes can be made easily when we recognize ourselves in that old woman and that old man who lives in our neighborhood. JOSEPH GADBAW, MD

Commissioner on Aging

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## Farmington Observer

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