

FEAR & LOAFING

# Disco inferno

They're gone. The disco records are finally gone. Today, at our annual garage sale, I sold my last surviving disco albums for a quarter each. Every spring for 12 years, I've lugged Donna Summer, Gloria Gaynor and The Village People out of the basement, hoping some troglodyte in a white suit with lapels wide enough to land a jet on would show up for them.

How did I come to own this collection?

Even now, over a decade later, it's hard to admit — I worked as a DJ at the local discotheque. (Don't laugh, you were there, too. I remember your zodiac medallion.)

Back in 1979, things were, well, a little slow in the advertising world. Executives found their desks out in the parking lot. Copywriters went from pushing pencils to selling pencils overnight.

To augment our incomes, lots of us ad guys took part-time jobs. I decided to make it show biz — the area of show biz that required no skills other than dodging flying bottles.

PART SOCIAL director and part psychologist, I matched the music and lights to the pulse of the crowd. My job was to make them dance until their kneecaps exploded and their tendons flew apart and they bought excess of expensive drinks to ease the pain.

I hate to brag, but I worked in one of the classier clubs in town. Styled after Studio 54 in New York, we were very selective in our clientele. The doorman hand-picked the crowd according to a strict pecking order: Celebrities were admitted first. Then came international jetsetters and financial tycoons. Finally, a smattering of artists, models and fashion mavens were sprinkled about for atmosphere.

Unfortunately, since this was Michigan and not Manhattan, only nine people made it inside.

As time went on, the screening system was loosened slightly to include hunchbacks, the criminally insane and clog dancers from the Wisconsin Dells. On Wednesdays, there was no cover charge for farm animals.

The first documented outbreak of disco was in Paris. It then spread to the East Coast by airline pilots. By the time a vaccine was found, "Saturday Night Fever" had infected the Midwest.

I saw this cultural shift as a new



Karl Nilsson

art form, a second Renaissance, a way to draw the human spirit upward . . . In other words, it took like an easy way to make money and meet girls.

I CAREFULLY selected my outfit for total disco impact:

- Flared pants of no-nonsense petroleum, low in the waist and tailored to break just above the ankles.
- Sex machine body suit, tapered fit, long pointy collars and unbuttoned to the navel.
- Mucho macho jewelry — The open shirt revealed a subtle hint of jewelry. By that I mean the same diameter chains used at tractor pulls to drag crushed cars around, only plated in gold and worn in tasteful groupings of 47 at a time.
- Get-down, get-with-it platform shoes — More like stilts than shoes, these ego boosters came with balance poles. If you fell down, you had to call road service to get back on your feet.

By wearing earplugs, I could limit the hearing loss. By secretly reading books, I could limit the brain damage. By locking myself in the booth, I could even avoid getting beat up.

But the one hazard I couldn't avoid was the choking smoke. Five hours in a nightclub was like working inside a Weber grill.

I KNEW THE smoke was painful, but I never suspected it was dangerous until the fumes from my shirt killed the parakeet. Today, the EPA ranks "second-hand" cigarette smoke right up there with radon gas as a Class A carcinogen.

Fortunately, disco fizzled out before my lungs did.

Incidentally, I've kept the shoes. They're great for cleaning the gutters without a ladder. And in honor of Earth Day, I'm taking the polyester pants to the recycling center. They still smell like smoke, but I hear they can be made into plastic milk jugs.

So don't be surprised if one morning your breakfast cereal switches from "snap, crackle and pop" to "stayin' alive, stayin' alive . . ."

STREET SENSE

# Solve problem intelligently

To the readers: This letter refers to a previous letter from worried parents pertaining to their daughter being scapegoated at school. The advice in this column was to look deeply into the problem before deciding further course of action.

Barbara

Dear Barbara Schiff, Your sad and demented advice to G.A. about her tormented daughter reminded me of the exact same problem I had at 11. I was given the same kind of talk. I was so ashamed of myself that I had "let" this happen to me that I never told my parents until I literally couldn't take it anymore.

I was falling apart — not from punches and blows — but from being

degraded day after day. Then my parents talked with my teacher and the principal — which got me more embarrassed.

The I get the idea that I was picked on because I was "withdrawn and quiet," as if I wasn't myself, none of it would have happened — all of which is b.s.

My advice to G.A.'s daughter? Stand up for yourself. Get really mad at this girl and call her every name in the book. Most important do it in front of the whole class. She has no right to treat you like this.

It will be really scary doing this, I know. It's a hard thing to do. But I'll bet all my money that once you show everyone that you're not going to take it anymore, a lot of kids will stand up for you! And you're going to feel a lot better. Just do it. You have

nothing to lose and everything to gain.

In the words of the immortal David Lee Roth: "Stand up! The more you do it, the less you fall down."

Dear No Name, I don't know if you are a boy or a girl. Either way, the response is the same.

I hope that as you go through life you will learn from your experiences that there are more creative solutions to life's problems than getting angry and denouncing other people.

If getting angry is the first step on the road to becoming an intelligent problem solver, then I applaud you and anticipate that you will make further progress in your development.

Barbara



Barbara Schiff

If you have a question or comment for Barbara Schiff, a trained therapist and experienced counselor, send it to Street Sense at 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

# To park, not park your car

Continued from Page 1

some 15 lots in the metropolitan area and services private customers.

He loves his job and believes it makes a comfortable income, depending on the assignment. A reception for President Nixon is his most memorable event.

"HE SPOKE AT THE Detroit Economic Club and a reception followed at Max Fisher's home," he said. "There were only 20 people talking with him and he was autographing his new book."

Besides the hourly wage, which is usually more than the minimum, there are the all important tips — that is if he doesn't get "stiffed." Even though a dollar is most common, Zager's largest tip was \$100. If he works a private party, he may walk away with a bottle of champagne or liquor as a gift from a pleased customer in addition to his tips, which can range between \$15 and \$30.

But valet parking like other occupations has its rough times. Once, while working a party where a chimney fire started and spread rapidly through the house, Zager and the other attendants had to move quickly — the cars, that is.

"We had to move 50-100 cars in a few minutes so the firemen could get through," he said.

Zager added that it's "almost customary" for the host to come out and tell the valets if a guest has had too much to drink and an alternate way home is being provided.

"Tom Schoenith is very sensitive about letting people drive home drunk," he said. "He always pays for the cab ride or finds someone to take that person home."

"I've even taken a few people home. Sometimes, the person becomes violent because you have his car and it's his property."

Zager's boss, Brian Albertsen, said that working outside in the elements is the hardest part of the job.

"WHEN IT RAINS, you get a lot of people who normally don't use the valet service," said the Livonia resident. "That's not your best tipping situation and you go home soaked at the end of the night."

Lynda Starkey, a 25-year-old Michigan State University student, is employed by Charley's Crab Restaurant in Troy. A forestry major, Starkey's only complaint is "frozen fingers." But she's still happy to be outside . . . Now, being a female valet, well, that's another matter.

"Men ask me if I'm old enough to drive or make comments like 'Do you know how to drive a stick shift?'" she said. "They call me honey or dear; they don't treat men like that. But it's no big deal."

Starkey has found that tips are better, "if you're a female."

"I attend MSU and sometimes, if a customer went to MSU, he'll tip a little higher . . . that's if I get a chance to tell him," she said.

IN THE LONG run, this occupation has its "attractive" moments despite the elements. As valet Luke Lukaskis puts it, "It's a hell of a lot of fun; you meet people, make a lot of money and it's great exercise. I'm not going to do this all my life but I like meeting girls and staying in shape."

Lukaskis, who works the night spots like Clubland, Taboo and the Landsdowne, said that one evening he went to open the door of a car full of young women. In the process of helping them out of the vehicle, they pulled him inside.

"They were kissing me and grabbing me," he said. "The other valets told me to go with them for awhile."

"It happens all the time. You just got to cope with it."



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

According to customers, Larry Wells deserves a hug because he's a "great guy" and "gives" excellent service at Northland's valet parking area.

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# STREET SEEN

## Denise Susan Lucas

Our intrepid Street Scene reporter is always looking for the unusual and welcomes comments and suggestions from readers and entrepreneurs. Send those to this column in care of this newspaper, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, or call 591-2300, Ext. 313.



**Collectible couple**

Sir Robert (the distinguished looking rabbit) and Lady Ashley (the feline beauty), official residents of Londondshire, are among a collection of clothique collectibles available at the Golden Pond, 730 N. Woodward, Birmingham. \$64.95 each.

# Bloomin' baggies

A creative alternative to the traditional "dozen of roses" could be this designer bag filled with assorted potted plants such as gardenias, tulips, hyacinths, combined with forsythia, pussywillow and other foliage. Choose from several themes: oriental, romantic, contemporary or Victorian themes. Affordable Flowers, 1820 S. Woodward, Birmingham.



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