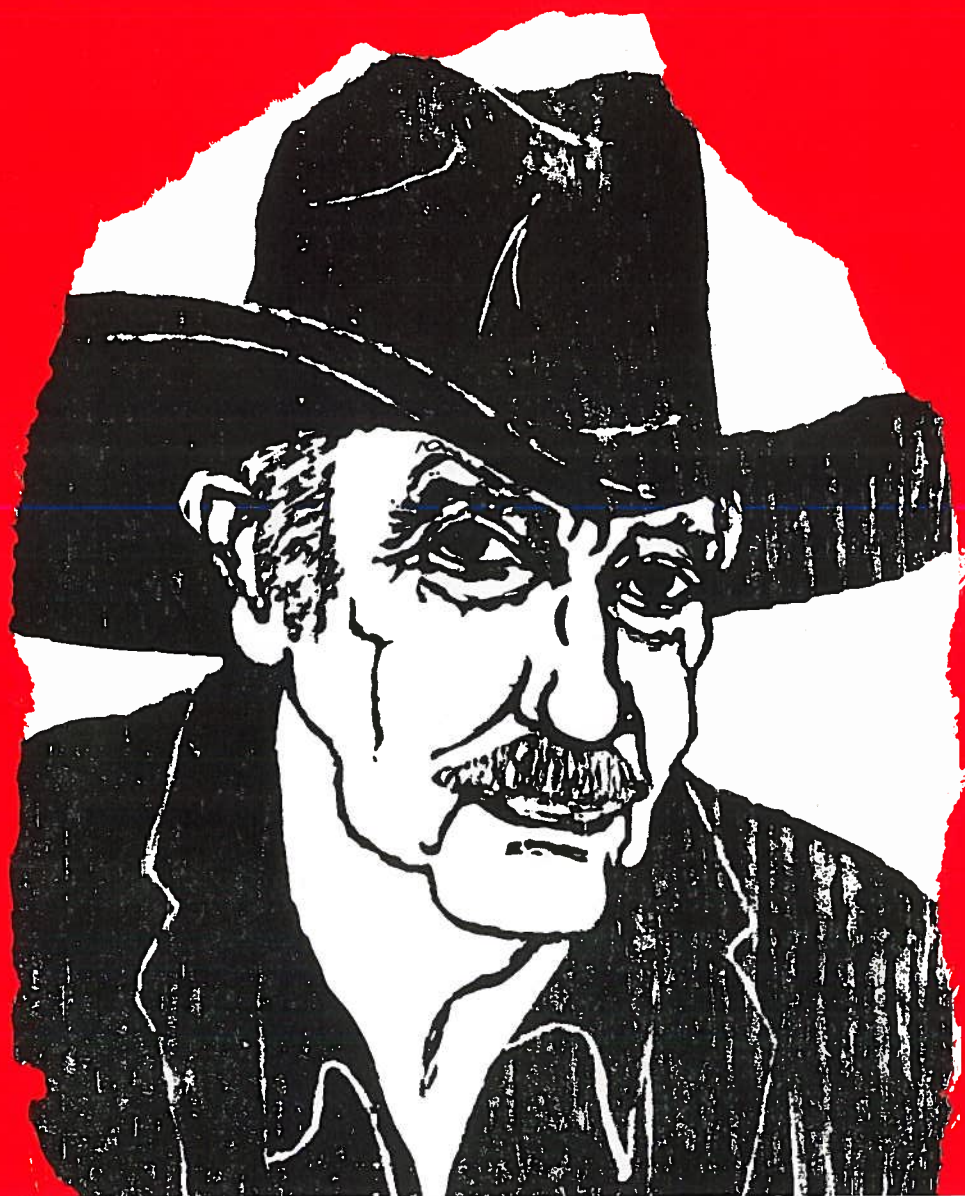


*Tales from the Taxicab
and Other Stories from
Carmel-by-the-Sea
by Ann Colburn*



Goe's Taxi

Village Cab

Yellow Cab



Sam Wilson '73

*The Plaster Castle
Home of the
Carmel Taxi Association*

*Tales from the Taxicat
and Other Stories from
Carmel-by-the-Sea
by Sam Colburn*

*The portrait on the
cover is a woodcut
by Mary Burr*

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Acknowledgements

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In appreciation of further unique help may I thank Lotus Timmins for her expert proof-reading, Harry Timmins for showing me how a book is put together, and Milton Mayer, Professor of English, who only suggested forty two changes.

My co-conspirators in the publishing of this manuscript and illustrations, Mae Waldrop, Marion Greenwood, and Dr. and Mrs. Ben Heller, gave me encouragement and help.

Those of my friends who read the manuscript and laughed have my deep gratitude.

Sam Colburn

Forewords

Some refer to Sam as the Hat that drives. For that is all one sees when his taxi goes by.

What we have here is view of Carmel-By-The-Sea through the spokes of a steering wheel by the Hat that drives. Underneath this Hat, eyes through the wheel, in a taxi that has seen better days, sits Sam, who has also seen better days and has lived to tell about it.

As I was reading these tales, I kept thinking that if John Steinbeck had spent more time on this side of the Hill instead of wading around tide-pools in Monterey with Doc Ricketts, literary history might have been different. With an honest job of hacking behind him, Steinbeck might well have written this book — beginning with the line: “Carmel-By-The-Sea in California is a poem, a shriek, a funny noise, a quality of mist, a dial tone, a fixation, a nostalgia, a dream.”

But too bad, John, you missed this one. This one is Sam’s. Slipping through the streets in Joe’s Taxi with the eye of a poet and painter and the ear of a fox, Sam says, in Goya’s words, “Yo lo vi”. I saw this. And every word is true.

Eldon Dedini
Cartoonist

When first I arrived in Carmel some thirty odd years ago, Joe’s Taxi was my main means of locomotion. The cab drivers of that day were a mixed bag of “at liberty” philosophers — probably the most delightful group of Hackies that ever I met in my travels from coast to coast.

It’s been a long time since I’ve ridden in a Carmel Taxi but it’s good to know that things haven’t changed much.

Steve Crouch
Photographer and Writer

This book isn’t Old Carmel. *Sam Colburn* is Old Carmel — and is about all that is left of it. Sam, unchanged, was and is what made Carmel Carmel, a wonderful wild game refuge. He still is wild game — first and last an artist in a nonartistic, yea, in an anti-artistic world. He’s a great painter; his sketches are great; his world and his life are great: they are captured here.

Milton Mayer
Newspaper Man

Introduction

Throughout these United States, in any town or small city, the local taxi business becomes an involuntary Central Intelligence Agency. The cabbies and the dispatchers have a knowledge of community happenings which cannot come from any other source. Particularly in Carmel. Regardless of this certain news travels very quickly throughout the Carmel Family. Although few of us are blood relatives, the rapidity of communication is amazing.

When we were young it was terribly important to know where the action was each night. Our week consisted of seven nights of parties. The Office of Singing Wires, known as the Western Union, has been closed for years. F. Robert Smith ran that institution. You could get the evening forecast from him either at the Office or at his Annex which was Whitney's Bar and Grill.

That knowledge of local life accumulated in daily work by the cab drivers and the dispatchers is locked in the archives of their minds. In the interest of Local Security it is not released. The "Tales from the Taxicab" are either funny incidents or bizarre occurrences—not gossip. It can be revealed, however, that the most important people in Carmel are the hairdressers. If the driver of the cab is late in arriving to take a local dame to the beauty shop, we have violated a sacred trust. Never mind the doctors. They keep you waiting anyhow. I heard a funny story about a man who had been kept simmering in the reception room with his germs for an hour after his appointed time to see the medico. He sent a bill to the doctor for the hour of his time.

Hardly a day passes at the cab stand without "the moment of truth" arriving for either a customer or one of our magnificent and luxurious taxis. People who are ill and not flat on their back, call the cab to take them to the hospital. On the occasion of a Vehicle Disability, meaning one of the fleet is not fit for the road, the co-owner of the business, is, fortunately enough, a mechanic besides being a driver.

I answered a ring the other day. A lady, very agitated, said, "A woman is having a baby."

I responded, "Where are you?"

She replied, "At the Post Office. It's my daughter." I said, "No cab for 15 minutes." She hung up. I realized that the woman's daughter was probably having the baby at the Monterey Peninsula Community Hospital, and many mothers think that their little girls cannot have babies without them.

Just in case that the birth was about to take place at the Post Office, I called the police as the System is only experienced in the delivery of mail.

When I arrived to live in Carmel in the late '30s, Joe Olivera was operating a cab. He took phone calls in a wooden packing crate which was upended and served as a stand at Sixth and Dolores. In those halycon days, "Bobby", Florence Reavis, was innocent of "hacking", and ran a nursery for children.

"Tales from the Taxicab" come from that flowering of the Carmel Taxi Association as it existed on Junipero Street between 4th and 5th Avenues during the early '70s. "and Other Stories from Carmel-by-the-Sea" is a small sampling from the great store of local folklore, and within my experience as a resident. There is no chronological order in either the Tales or the Stories, but these happenings are held together within the loose but very definite embrace of The Carmel Family.

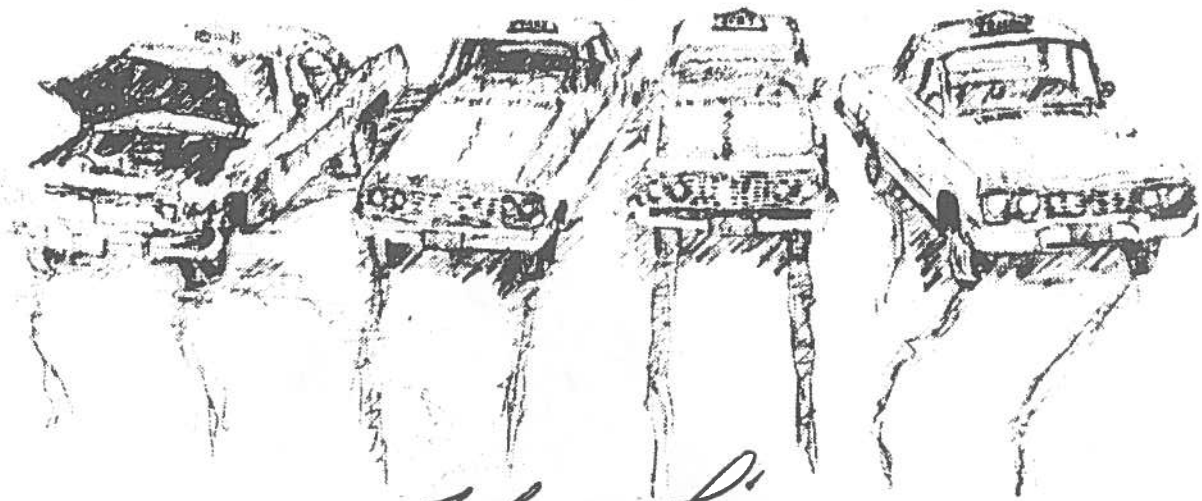


·“Bobby”

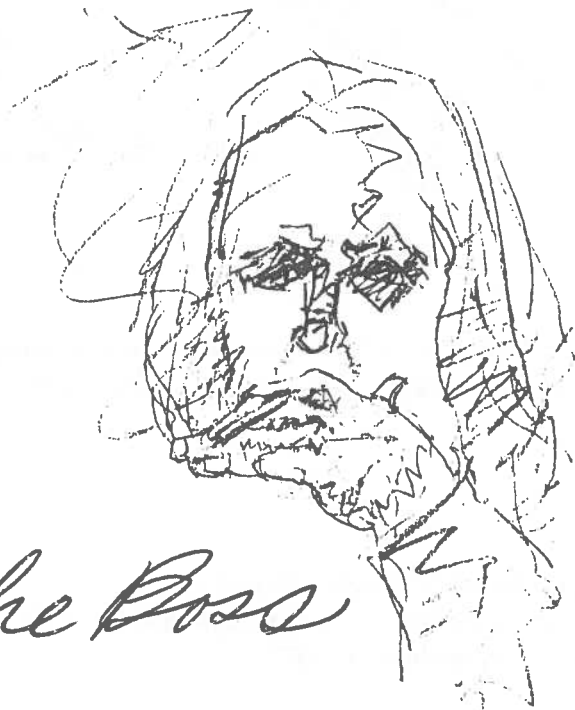
“BOBBY IS the one, grand, quintessential mother — irritable, people-worried, impatient, buyer of birthday presents, intuitive cook, hates sissys, reads palms, and spreads the butter on Labor Day sweet rolls.”

The book is affectionately dedicated to Florence Reavis.

The quote is from an article, “Joe’s Taxi: a kaleidoscope of Carmel life”, written by Bradwell Scott of the Carmel Pine Cone, September 13, 1973.



The Line



The Boss

The Carmel Taxi Association

In the once village of Carmel on Junipero, between 4th and 5th, there is, or was, a little, Plaster Castle which had been for years the home of the Carmel Taxi Association. On the roof of the entrance porch was a flower box full of struggling geraniums which was rather like a tiara on an aging dowager.

From the narrow driveway, bounded by the building and a hedge on one side, and a telephone pole and huge pine on the other, the valiant if battered taxis of the line emerged to seek out their customers.

The plaster edifice and the parking area were a scene of erosion viewed from the rear. The wheels of the cabs pulling in and out had, over the years cut grooves in the dirt. The stairway leading down from the kitchen was delapidated. The drivers descended with caution. The steps had been patched again and again with random planks. The corner of the building where the drivers swung into the backyard had been nicked so often that it looked like some rat had been nibbling at the bottom of the cake. A few hunks of plaster clung to the chicken-wire base.

Entering our little castle from the back door you passed through the kitchen — a place distinguished by the following smells: first and most dominant was the odor of what had been cooked by the night drivers. The underlying stink came, however, from years of frying and from the water in the sink which when drained simply went into the ground underneath as the plumbing was disconnected.

Next to the kitchen was the Operations Room of the Carmel Taxi Association. Behind a great desk was a big swivel-chair which was the Dispatcher's Throne.

Every morning this seat of command was occupied by the Nite Man, Ed, who at 7 a.m. turned into a Dispatcher. Having been on duty as a driver since 7 p.m. the night before, he was tired. He awaited the arrival of Madame with a jollity usually attained after a leisurely breakfast of one quarter pint of vodka. She always left word for him to call her at 8 a.m. He would dial and say, "Hello dear. It's 8 o'clock — oh, call you again in half an hour. All right dear." Then he would ring again at that time with more soft talk, and after that, every fifteen minutes until it got to be 10 o'clock. With each succeeding delay, although his voice was still low and sweet to her, he became madder and would finally slam down the phone muttering, "Dammit Bobby, get the hell up here." Eventually, he would call and she would be ready and a driver was dispatched to get her.

Madame was Florence Reavis, known to all Carmelites as "Bobby". Her more than ample shape was always enveloped in flowered silks which fell softly to her ankles. Madame when ensconced on her throne, surrounded by a battery of three phones, was in command and indomitable. Answering calls for cabs, dispensing advice, telling drivers where to go, and capable of a snarling sarcasm when they could not follow directions; she remained at her post swathed in cigarette smoke until the wee small hours.

Bobby helped many of us who were down and out. With a solid base of two drivers she had in addition about eight who were in constant flux. Be they school teachers, preachers, artists, writers, or garbage collectors, she would, if they had good records with the Motor Vehicle Department, hire them.

The Carmel Taxi Association held and still holds three franchises: Joe's Taxi, The Village Cab, and Yellow Cab. The drivers come closer to fulfilling American cliches about cabbies than those of any other taxi company in the United States. "Hacking" is, in our conception, what the promising young writer or artist does to keep the pot boiling before success arrives.



Mark William
Driver

Lynn Colburn '73

Wilton Road
Carmel Pausano



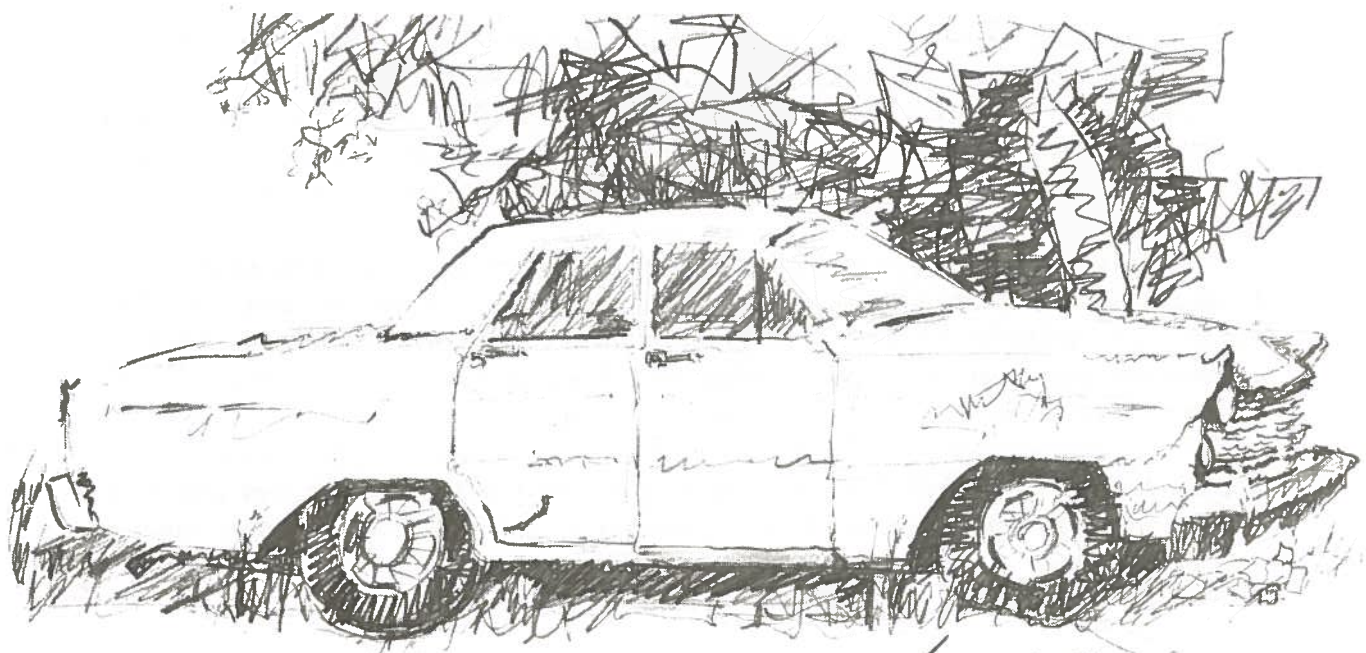
World around the life-time cabbie has a weathered look and a wary eye. Fighting traffic and pleasing customers becomes abrasive. Jean looked more like a "cab driver" than any of the others, past or present. His was a face you might see behind the wheel in Paris, Rome, New York, or, as it happens, on the Monterey Peninsula. Wizen, wise, and perky. He came on duty at 9 a.m., and you had to avoid letting him nail you in the corner with conversation. Apparently, for breakfast he had garlic marinated in red wine.

As our little plaster castle was originally built to be a residence, there were three other rooms, besides the kitchen and the Operations Room, which, of course, had been the living room. One bedroom was the Driver's Room with a long sway backed couch and huge, black leather chair both redolent with stale sweat, and shaped by collapsing bodies. Most of us coming in for a brief respite between runs could fall asleep in the act of sitting or lying down.

The other bedroom, which was reached either through the bathroom or from the kitchen, had become the Parts Department. It was a repository for old clutch plates, hub caps, tires, rear vision mirrors, transmission fluid, nuts and bolts, and etcetera — all of it held together with a common bondage of grease.



The Dispatcher
Ed Heberer



Old #4

Sam Albani '73



*Frank Lida
Driver, Mechanic,
and Co-owner*

Femme Fatale

Sam Colburn's most dramatic and trying trip came during his first two months of driving the cab. One might expect trouble with drunks, but certainly not from a patron to be picked up at the Community Hospital. He was dispatched to pick up a fare there, and soon had the released patient resting comfortably in the rear seat of the taxi. She was a pallid blonde of some fifty summers, not to mention the winters. Even if healthier she would have been no apparent femme fatale. At least that is what he thought. She wanted to go to her home in the Hacienda, a retirement home in Carmel Valley. All went calmly until they approached the stop light at the top of Ocean Avenue.

At that moment she became quite excited and said, "Please don't let that man in the bright, yellow car see us."

Sam was driving in the inside lane, and looking ahead could see this shiny, new Toyota ahead in the left lane. As he had no way of making the cab invisible, the man did indeed see them, and immediately reversed, crossing in front of the taxi, and pulled up alongside on their right. The light changed and Sam went thru. So did the yellow Toyota, still on the right where there was no lane. The man kept his car in that position to a point about fifty yards thru the intersection where he really gunned it and shot across our bow to the other side of the road where he continued to drive in the oncoming lane until a massive truck came up the hill and directly at him. Then this madman turned and stopped directly at right angle to the highway halfway across the center stripe. He jumped out, threw a lady's hat in the middle of the road, and tossed a vial against the cab. It broke on the window on the driver's side, and drops of liquid spattered the glass.

Sam could see the man now. He was young, black haired, and stocky. He jumped back into the yellow Toyota, and, thank God, went back up the highway.

The lady said, "He thinks he knows me better than he does."

Sam asked, "What does he do?"

Replied la femme fatale, "He comes from Latin America, and is studying Police Science at Monterey Peninsula College."

Well, thought Sam, at least I know what a hot-blooded Latin Lover is.

Lady in Reverse

One day idling along San Carlos after taking a fare to the Woods, I heard the sound of a motor at full throttle. Looking across the street I could see a lady in her car at the curb, jaw firmly set, slowly pushing the car behind down the street.

At that moment Dudley Nix ran across the street in his white tennis shorts, stuck his head briefly in her car, withdrew, and she pulled forward out of the parking space.

Later I saw Dudley and said, "What did you say to her?"

He answered, "Lady you are in reverse and you are pushing my car back down the street."

She said, "I am not in reverse."

"Well", said Dudley, "Put it in reverse."

According to a retired judge who has lived in Carmel since birth, driving in Carmel is Russian Roulette at every intersection. As Carmelites are fervid gardeners and protectors of the sacred Monterey Pine tree (*Pinus Radiatus*), property is heavy with growth right up to the corners. The Blind Intersection is commonplace. This in common with Tunnel Vision is the cause of many a

smashup. Some Carmelites think their right of way is supreme and predestined so they simply drive right through the intersections without looking either left or right.

One of our local patrolmen observed an old lady driving uptown on the wrong side of the road. He approached her head-on with red lights flashing so that she had to stop. He got out and went to the driver's side. She wouldn't roll down the window.

He yelled at her, "You are driving on the wrong side of the street."

She screamed back at him, "That's what I always do. I like it that way."



Solomon's Solution

One morning F.D. was sitting, eyes closed, on one of the great mangy couches in the cab stand. Most of us could fall asleep in the mere act of sitting down. The phone rang and Bobbie, the boss, answered. The man spoke so loudly F.D. could hear him. The noise in back of his voice suggested furniture being smashed and crockery being tossed about.

"Send a cab to the dead end of Lincoln and 3rd right away." F.D. was "up" so he got the trip. When he arrived in front of the house nobody came out so he went to the door and knocked. A woman in a red dressing robe opened the door. Behind her was a harrassed looking gent with a long scratch on his face running from his temple down to the jaw; however no blood was flowing.

"Get out of here", he yelled at the dame.

"No, I won't", she sobbed in reply.

"Yes you will", he bellowed and handed F.D. five dollars. At that moment a tiny cat pussyfooted up, and stood between the man and the woman. She leaned over quickly, picked up the cat, ran to the taxi, and got in the back seat. F.D. hurried out, got in, and rolled up the windows and locked all the doors except the one on his side.

The man came storming out, yelling, "Give me that cat".

As he could not get in any of the doors, he came to the driver's side.

"Don't get physical", said F.D.

The man, buffaloed, replied, "Okay, I'll call the cops", and ran into the house.

From the back seat the woman's voice came to F.D. "Please go".

F.D. hesitated, and said, "No, let's wait a minute. In a moment the man reappeared, walked quickly to F.D., pressed three more dollars into his hand, and blurted, "Get out of here before the cops come".

So F.D. "got" with the cat, by this time, in his lap. "What would you have done", he said next day to the policeman whom he knew must have answered the call.

"Well", answered the officer, "there was Solomon's Solution".

Pellie and Thomas Edison

One of our favorite fares was Elsie Martinez, known as Pellie. Clear minded and active at 84, she took one back to early Carmel. The village was indeed the "Seacoast of Bohemia" during the first years of this century. Here was a lady who had mixed it up with Jack London, George Sterling, and Jimmy Hopper. Her husband was the painter, Xavier Martinez, a man considerably older than she, and an artist basic to the painterly traditions of the San Francisco Bay area.

Pellie had a theory, which if true, would have destroyed one of our Folk Heroes. According to her a news story in a Spanish language newspaper of San Francisco, told of a team sent from the University of Texas into Mexico to ascertain if our own Thomas Edison was indeed a Mexican whose real name was Thomas d'Alva. The men on the team found the village where this man was born, and in the town a house in front of which a plaque had been placed inscribed, "Thomas d'Alva". From talking to relatives the following story emerged.

Thomas d'Alva was a brilliant young student. In Mexico his research was limited. He could only go so far in science. He decided to go to the United States. He did not have enough money for train fare after getting to the border, but he was allowed to ride in the baggage compartment. Apparently this young scientist had brought some test tubes and chemicals with him, and succeeded in blowing up the baggage car—not really but there was an explosion. On the train was a Swede by the name of Edison who already had a laboratory in New Jersey. He was so impressed with the young Mexican's talent that he offered him a position in the laboratory. The conditions were that he change his name to Thomas Alva Edison, and that he never refer to his homeland.

That is Pellie's story.



Winston Sargent, Driver



*James Crumpley
Driver and
Minister*

Sara G. Brown '73

Electricity on the Loose

The afternoon was sunny, not a cloud in the sky, as Sam Colburn finished a run in the taxi and was making a U turn at Junipero and 4th. In an instant all Hell broke loose. Suddenly a thunder and lightning storm had gathered right over his head-a shattering boom, a bright blue flash, and then a vicious crackling. He was surprised that he was still alive and well as he completed the turn. He looked back. The cable carrying electricity across the intersection had, for some reason, pulled apart. The broken lines were dangling from the poles, and one end, wires sticking out, was spitting electric sparks.

The Carmel Police Station is right at that intersection, and the whole force was out on the street in seconds.

Well, no one was "burned". It seems that one block away a heavy limb had broken off from the huge pine at that corner, and fallen on the cable with such impact that the transmitted shock pulled the wires apart a block away.

Mrs. J

We did not get many calls from Mrs. J, but when we did her voice was imperative, and carried the insinuation of a trip to Madagascar although she was merely coming uptown. Sam, who had lost his hair, used to be a driver, but turned to dispatching the cabs. He was on duty one day when she phoned. In a voice that was definitely that of the Upper Class, she asked for a "personal".

"Is Frank driving?"

"Yes mam", Sam answered, "but he is on a trip now. Do you want a cab right away".

"Yes", she replied, "but don't send that tiny man with the bald head who looks thru the wheel when he drives".

Inheritance

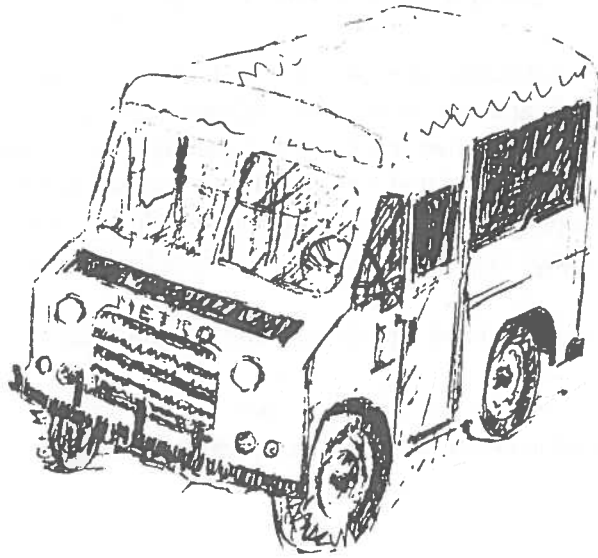
Jacques Burgess, a Swiss financier, moved from the Alps to the precipitous slopes of Big Sur where the mountains are embraced by the Pacific Ocean. He brought a delightful French wife with him, and they lived in the Big South until his declining health forced them to move closer to doctors and hospitals.

His excellent nurse, Pearl Ross, was a friend of Sam Colburn's. It appeared that Jacques, at one point was about to expire. He asked Pearl to give away some of his clothes to a needy person. As Sam was about the same build as Mr. Burgess, she phoned him. He was delighted to receive a sport coat, and expensive Scotch tweed suit, and two pairs of shoes.

Jacques Burgess did not die, at least not then. He lived in a lush retirement home, Del Mesa, and one day Joe's Taxi got a call from him for a taxi. Bobbie dispatched Sam to get him. Mr. Burgess was a slight, dyspeptic man with black hair and mustache. He needed the taxi to go and see his doctor in Monterey. As Sam drove him down to the floor of the valley, he realized that this was indeed his benefactor who had not died after all.

"You know, Mr. Burgess, I am wearing your shoes." he said, lifting one foot from the floorboard and waving it around.

"I see," responded Jacques. "Well take good care of that tweed suit. It was very expensive."



*The U.S.S. Mysses, residence of Ray, Lisa,
Bush, and Rami Cadena*



*Sam Colburn 73
Ray Cadena, Soldier of Fortune*



Rami Cadena

The Cadena Family

The decaying stucco palace which was the Cab Stand was a home for all seasons. Madame Reivas who ran the joint was a most ample lady who smoked continually and who was able to answer three phones at once without removing the fag from her kisser. She was most tolerant of drivers with certain problems of living.

There was, for instance, Ray Cadena. He was Mexican-American with a big, black mustache and also thick, curly hair. He was round and burly. As a boxer during the war, he fought exhibition matches in various camps for U.S. troops in Europe. He met at that time a fraulein and married her. When he came to work as a taxi driver, he had this wife and, by then, two children. According to Ray, as soon as each infant could talk, each one chose his own name. What they had been called up to that time I do not know. The boy, who was the oldest, named himself Bush, and the little girl decided she was Rain.

Ray and his wife, Bush and Rain lived in their station wagon. You could park your car all night alongside the road which separated the Carmelite Monastery from the beach which was infested with skin divers during the day. On other nights Ray drove the car onto the cement service platform behind the taxi stand.

As Ray made a little money in excess of what they needed for food, clothes, and gas, he bought an old Metro Mite. This was a curious vehicle in that it was almost square. The advantage over the station wagon was that you could stand up in it.

The Cadenas took off for Mexico one day, and we have not seen them since.



Sam to Burn '73

Bush Cadena



"I can stagger by myself"

Elbow Benders

Our daytime barflies get started early in Carmel. How they get to the various springs is a mystery to us as we in the taxi business take them in one direction — home.

Since the early 40's, the bars have changed in Carmel. They were once well-lighted and open on the street. Drinking in those days was a public sport. Most of the drinkers were young and active. The saloons were stations for finding out where the action was, and we sallied forth from them to various parties. Now the elbow bending is done in dens of darkness where an aura of light emanates from the bar well only.

When a bartender calls a cab for a customer the driver has to go inside the bar and wait for two minutes before he can see. The client is nearly always sitting at the bar with a full drink in front of him. If he has had only two drinks, he already thinks that somehow that cab should materialize right in front of him. Several bars are back in courts. The driver has to double park, and walk fifty yards or more to get the client.

One night we had a call from the Aztec. The co-owner of the taxi business, Frank Gida, was our mechanic and also a driver. He was "up" and got the trip. Arriving in front of the court he double parked leaving the keys in the car, and walked back to the bar. As usual the customer had to polish off that last drink. Frank escorted him out and to the curb. Alas, there was no cab there.

Of course the police were notified. We heard from them the next day. The cab had been located in a town called Perris which is near San Bernadino. According to the law, three soldiers had simply gone on a rather long joy ride — over three hundred miles. Well, as we said at the cab stand, it couldn't have happened to a better man.

We used to pick up a nice lady, Evette Langley, and take her home from her daily bout with Demon Rum. On this one afternoon she had enjoyed an arduous session which left her plastered by early afternoon. I was dispatched to pick her up at Sade's. She relaxed on the back seat of my battered but still luxurious taxi. Arriving in front of her house I thought I would help her navigate, which presented problems, as she had legs like an ostrich and a chest like a pouter pigeon. Grasping her firmly about the middle, we started down the long path to her tiny house in the rear. She pushed me away saying, "Lemme alone, I can stagger by myself." This she did until we arrived at three steps, and, on attempting to clear the hurdle, she simply collapsed like a wet rag. I could not pick her up, and indeed she showed no desire to rise. So I let her lay.

I passed by her place one half hour later. She was still resting soundly as she was an hour later. Was relieved to see that she had made it into the house as the body was not there in the morning.

Brownie

Another consistent elbow bender that we took home every afternoon about five, was an elderly lady dressed in brown. Hence we called her Brownie. One of the non-delights of hacking is double parking, and going into the gin mill to get the passenger. On one occasion Brownie departed from her usual haunt, Whitney's, and asked for the cab to pick her up at the Wine Tasting Cellar. When the driver arrived at the location, he saw Brownie perched unsteadily, brown bag in hand, on a stone step above the sidewalk. He double parked, got out, and moved quickly over the curb toward her. At that moment a young black, sporting a straw hat and dark blue suit, shot a hand in front of him holding a pamphlet — Watchtower. He grabbed it, but the delay was fatal and poor

Brownie toppled onto the sidewalk. The brown bag went clunk and a dark stream ran toward the gutter.

Old people are fragile. Gosh, thought the driver, I hope she hasn't broken her knee. He helped her up. The stockings were torn, and one knee, bruised and bleeding. She could walk, and apparently had suffered no broken bones. Indeed, her main regret seemed to be the breaking of the bottle, so the driver had to stop at Surf and Sand for another fifth of Gallo's dry sherry en route with Brownie to her little cottage on Mission Street.



*Dennis Hakim - DRIVER
Artist*



Frank Nida Agam

*Sleeping
Driver
James Colburn's*

Duties and Deportment of a Dispatcher

The Dispatcher must be cool and calm, thoughtful and considerate, docile and responsive, alert and accurate, but, most of all, patient and quick.

As Carmel is an international spa, he must be able to understand, if not speak, American of all flavors including Southern California Slurvian. He should comprehend English, and reply in American of clipped syllables. The Dispatcher should be fluid, if not fluent, in (1) German, (2) Spanish, (3) French, (4) Italian. It would help him to understand English as spoken by Koreans, Chinese, Japanese, Arabs, Vietnamese, Philipinos, Australians, New Zealanders, all Slavic peoples, Scandinavians, Indians from India, Mexicans, Latin Americans, Eskimos, and the Carmel Valley Indian. Travelers from the Dark Continent, Africa, are rare, but a little Swahili would help.

The Dispatcher must be able to tell the customer the time, down to the split second, at which the cab will arrive for him or her, making allowance for traffic blockage, accidents, child birth, earthquakes, alcoholics, and other Acts and Creatures of God.

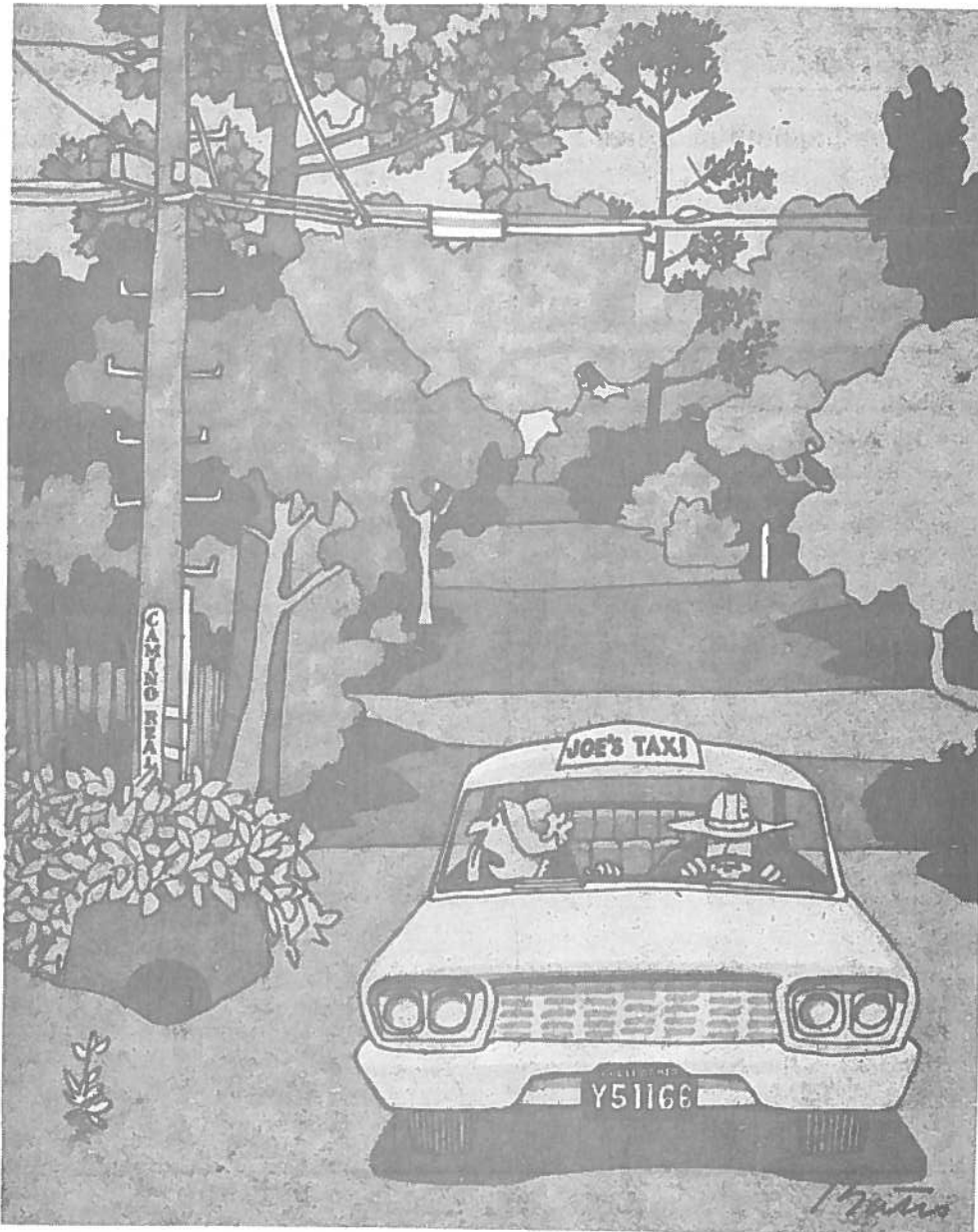
Sam Colburn

Now it is time to say something about the author and illustrator of these stories. His full name is Samuel Bolton Colburn. Although not far from the madding crowd, he lives in a quiet sanctuary called Stags Retreat in Pacific Grove, California. The sign beside the door says, "Sam Colburn, Artist and Golfer". As watercolor is his favorite medium, he was delighted to learn that the famous master of aquarelle, John Marin, was afflicted with the latter disease, namely golf. It is always with a renewed faith that he steps onto the first tee and addresses that little, white ball.

Sam has been with the Carmel Taxi Association several years, first as a driver and now as a dispatcher. In the days of the Plaster Castle, he often brought his watercolor paper and paints to the taxi stand. He painted well on the floor of the drivers' room, but he had to drop the brush and get behind the wheel at critical moments. The portrait of Sam was done by Mary Burr and is a woodcut. Mary, who once danced with Ballet Theatre, is now head of the graphics department at Monterey Peninsula College. This fine study of Sam reveals his desire to be in a cowboy movie, preferably as a villain. His parents brought him to Carmel with them when they visited the village in 1925. He regrets never asking them, before they passed, just how they knew about this colony by the sea where the air smelt of the sea, the pines, and woodsmoke. They lived in that developing amoeba down South in that section known as Glendale. This community lay outside of the realm of the Four Square Gospel, and was a Western outpost of the seventh Day Adventist Church. Accordingly there was a Battle Creek Sanitorium.

Their treatment for the flu was kill or cure. His parents had a nurse come over from the sanitarium, and give him the works when he was abed with the bug and a temperature of 102 degrees. The nurse boiled a blanket in a mammoth pot, fished it out, put it thru a wringer, and plunked it on his chest. He was allowed to simmer for about ten minutes. The nurse then reappeared, ripped off the blanket, and rubbed him with a cake of ice.

The performance was repeated "bottoms up". Others, who might have undergone this Spartan routine, moved North. This is Sam's explanation of why such wildly diverse characters as Barney Segal and Edward Weston got the hell out of there and came to Carmel.



"Oh dear, did she say it was a little blue house with pink shutters and a white dog, or a little yellow house with blue shutters and a black dog? No ... I remember now. She said it was a little grey house with green shutters and no gate ... or was it a little brown house with orange shutters and a broken gate? Or did she say it was a little ..."

Author at Work

Sam Colburn escaped from Long Beach in 1937, and moved to the village to become an artist. He has been a member of the Carmel Art Association since 1940, and plenty of watercolor has gone under the bridge since then.

Although he met his wife to be when she was sweet sixteen, he did not marry her until several years later. By then Grace Meridith had been married, divorced, and was the mother of two beautiful children, Teryl and Ritchie. Sam was in the prime of youth at age 45. He and the beautiful Grace were hitched in Aspen, Colorado. In a couple of years she had given birth to two boys, Bolton and Cyrus, both handsome babies naturally. Now all four kids have turned into adults.

Teryl is married to Royal Twombly and the mother of two girls. Ritch, brilliant and innovative, has helped to develop Metacolor - a unique process for putting color on black and white drawings or photographs. He and his wife are disciples of Bubba Free John.

Bolton Colburn went out to surf every morning for years. As an amateur surfer in 1977 he was first in the following surfing events: the California and the National Intercollegiate meets, and then succeeded in winning the contest for championship of the National Surfing Association. He is now a professional.

Cyrus Colburn will graduate soon from the University of California at San Diego with a degree in Graphic Arts. He has had one very successful showing of photographs, filmed the famous Feast of Lanterns at Pacific Grove, and is an ingenious pyrotechnician.

Getting back to Dad, he has enjoyed two one man showings of his watercolors each year since 1974. He was accepted by the Carmel Art Association in 1940, and is now an Honorary Life Member. Three days a week he sits before a battery of three phones and tells the drivers where to go for their fares. To do this he must know the Carmel community intimately. Streets change names mysteriously from one side of an intersection to the other. What happens to San Carlos Street as you go North on that road and pass the Hofsas House? Even on a clear day you can see no change except a slight curve, but suddenly you are on Camino Del Monte. As there are no house numbers within the City of Carmel, the dispatcher has to find out if the customer is on the North or South, or the East or West side of the street, and how many houses from the nearest intersection. Fortunately there is a large body of water, called the Pacific Ocean, which is directly on the West.

Several years ago The Great White Father in Washington decided to give house numbers to those houses outside of the city limits, but directly contiguous to the town area. For some obscure reason these numbers consist of five digits. One would think that the unincorporated area was ten miles out from the center of the City of Carmel which covers one square mile.

The Passing of the Plaster Castle

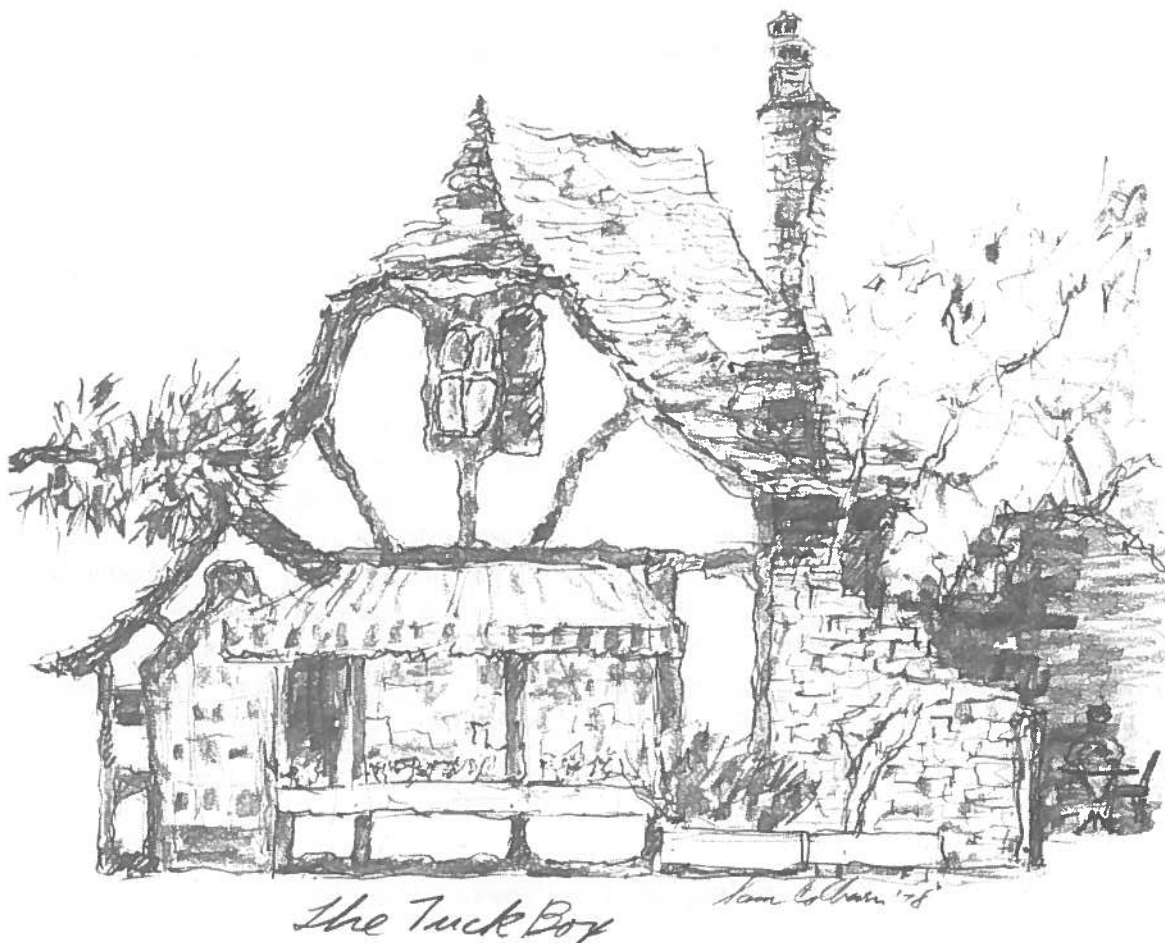
The first portent of the passing of our little plaster castle appeared in the person of a skinny man, dressed in a black suit, whose knobby head was either shaved or naturally hairless. You knew that this bald blackbird was very important as Madame Bobby treated him as visiting royalty.

"Oh, how are you Mr. Stock. Would you like to sit in this comfortable chair?"

This was a bad sign — this buttering up of a stranger. Mr. Stock had a long roll of papers. He held them under his arm. It developed they were plans for a parking lot. Mr. Stock had bought our "home away from home" because he was required by the City of Carmel to furnish parking for the tenants in apartments he had built a block away. Bobby was trying to keep the taxi stand intact as long as possible. The building was fated to fall by the Blade, meaning the bulldozer.

Now the property is a beautiful parking lot covered with decomposed granite. Gone is a Carmel way of life. Shortly before the demolition our Aunt Bobby died, and that was the end of an era. The cab stand was forced to move into the catacombs of the Carmel Plaza. The drivers, when they reported in or when they went off duty, had a walk down a long tunnel to enter the Operations Room, which was narrow, cramped the soul, but from which each Dispatcher worked the cabs without ever seeing the light of day.

Happily enough the Carmel Taxi Association has emerged from this cave. The office is now in a big, light room with a fine view of the Santa Lucia mountains.



And Other Stories from Carmel-by-the-Sea

In the Beginning there was Hugh Comstock. He knew that Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs had no place to live outside of the Story Books so he built proper houses for them in the business district in Carmel. The most famous of these is The Tuck Box on Dolores Street — another is now a famous bar called Sades. It is directly across from the Pine Inn on Ocean Avenue. These buildings appear to be the main reason Carmel is called “quaint”. The walls are white plaster, the roofs are steeply pitched, the eaves curved and covered with molded shingles.

Of course Mr. Comstock was not really In the Beginning. A very pleasant wooden house was built at Guadalupe Street and Fourth Avenue in the 1880's. Long before Incorporation or Aimee Semple McPherson, many redwood shacks were erected of single wall construction, and inhabited, mostly in the summer, by Stanford professors.

Those patron saints, Devendorf and Powers subdivided the land, and on October 31, 1916 the village was incorporated under the name, Carmel-by-the-Sea. The magic days had begun, and the ambience of the village attracted young people, artists, writers, musicians, and ne'er do-wells. The promoters had the inspired thought of giving free lots to artists-an approach unfortunately not taken up by other developers.

We were a polyglot group, the members of which were distinguished not because of wealth or intelligence, but rather because of the madness of their doings. One had seven nights per week to develop this talent which seemed to flower under strong drink. There were, of course, serious types like the Comings brothers, Richard and Sherman. They were religious, clean, strong, and worked their tails off. Both of these young men spoke in such a singular fashion that one wondered if they learned to talk just within the family as their speech seemed unrelated to any region in these United States.

As nearly all of us had arrived in Carmel without any family, a rather unique society developed. The neighborhood feeling did not exist, and, although there were natives in our midst, we were not visiting family but rather each other. Thru dropping into one of the local bars, we would find out where the “action” was for the evening. Thus a kind of Carmel Family came into being, and we still honor those ties and help each other when necessary.

Sports and Spenders

That singular madness known as Carmel came to full bloom from 1935 to 1942. The bombs falling at Pearl Harbor did indeed penetrate this world apart. Not that the zany or improbable disappeared entirely from the village, but the young men went off to the wars in one fashion or another, and they were the heart of party town.

For a period of years prior to the disruption of war, four bachelors lived together. What they had in common was a love of conviviality, women, drinking, and low incomes. It is true that one of their number, Sam Colburn, did live off his inheritance. F. Robert Smith, better known as Bob, ran the Western Union Office which was the original Central Intelligence Agency for Carmel. It was also close to the heart of social intrigue — Whitney's Bar and Grill. He could whip out of the office and thru a back passage way onto Ocean Avenue for a quick nip and the late news on where the Action was going to be for the evening.

Another of the quartet was Bill Nye who had a face that looked like it had been the target of a thousand fists. Bill pulled weeds up at that grand house known as the Greenan Estate. Built on

Philippine gold, directly across from the Mission, it was, during the reign of Edith Greenan, a salon to which many artists and writers were attracted.

Our group was filled out by Manual Moses Davis better known as "Stinky", or "Dave". He was certainly a "clothes" man and was equipped for any occasion, especially Wild Boar Hunting.

The first house that we infested was called the "Sports and Spenders Club." On Carmel Point at that time noise was no problem as the nearest neighbor was one hundred yards away, and probably had a party every night also.

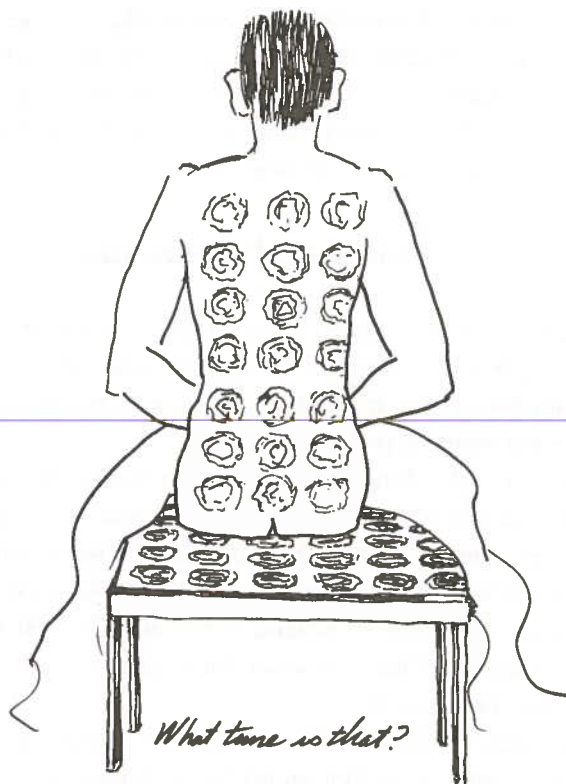
During one of our frequent, evening fiestas the Cat came in from Pebble Beach. At that time we all passed freely thru the toll gate and into those sacred grounds. Indeed, as we spend many an evening at the Lodge, we felt as if we had the right of entry. The Cat lived out there in simple elegance with his wife, Lorilot. His butler always wore white gloves, and there were real candles on the Christmas Tree.

That night as the party gradually shriveled in size in the wee small hours, it became apparent that the Cat should not return to his home. He was clobbered. We had only four beds in our redwood palace. We did have, however, a set of springs, bare but sturdy, and upon this the Cat reclined for the night with, of course, a couple of blankets thrown over him.

Sam Colburn was the only member of the group who had any interest in the Finer Things in Life. The following morning he descended the stairs from his bedroom, and went straight to a pile of records where he selected Beethoven's Fifth as the proper bracing music to begin the day. He put it on the record player, and the great, opening chords blasted forth. "Boom, boom, boom — Boom, boom, boom".

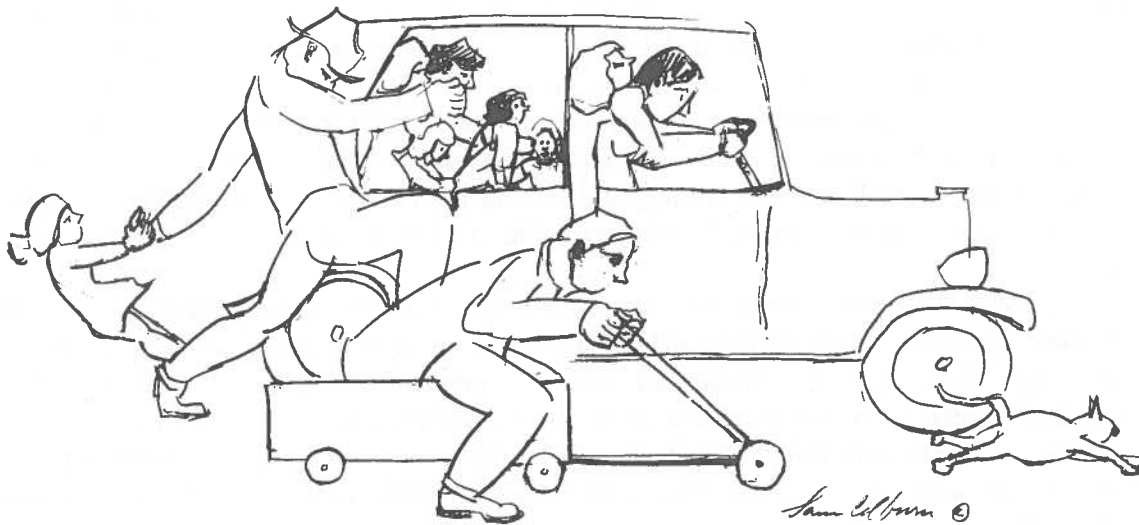
The figure under the blankets on the bare springs stirred. The head and torso came up slowly. The Cat looked as if he was rising from the dead. His back was covered with red rings.

"Say," he asked plaintively, "what is the name of that tune?"



The Night of the Evacuation

When on that wondrous December night in 1941 a good number of the Villagers found themselves trying to get the hell out of town, they didn't really know why. Take the case of my Uncle Crumby who didn't come to until he roared down the hill into Monterey in his weather-beaten Reo to find that town bright with normal lighting and business going as usual. He stopped, looked at the potted geranium, the two dogs, and the case of sardines that he had accumulated in his flight and pulled into the nearest bar for a good, stiff drink. He recollected that he had been sitting in his study reading a murder mystery by the light of a candle hidden under a newspaper when a voice from the street roared, "PREPARE TO EVACUATE". From then on all was a blank except that he remembered screaming, "What's happening?" And getting an answer: "Japs landing on the beach!"



Well, Uncle Crumby was pretty sore as were the rest of us when we found there was no fleet and no Japs. Down at Steve's for breakfast all the armchair generals blamed the local Office of Civilian Defense. Before long that thought was vindicated when it was learned that the order had come from the Office of Civilian Defense in Monterey.

The main trouble was that the village was ripe for evacuation. For three weeks the town had been blacked out. The blackout wasn't too good. The houses were all dark; down in the business district even Fortier had turned off the artificial daylight in his drug store, but street lamps were on and so were the lights of the power house. The Mayor phoned Joe Means in Pacific Grove who was the only man on the Peninsula who could turn them off, but he had gone to Castroville for a genuine spaghetti feed. From the air that night Carmel must have been a brilliant jewel-piece. Around 2 A.M. some of the members of the city council were seen throwing rocks at the lamps, thereby fulfilling a childhood ambition.

From that first blackout on, the villagers got more jittery. Any loyal, right minded citizen realized that Carmel would be the first place attacked by the enemy so we were ready to take flight and head for the hills. I was a block warden and, accordingly, made the rounds to ask my flock for a complete blackout from dusk to dawn.

That afternoon the local fire siren wailed out the air raid signal at about five o'clock to get people on their toes. When I finished my rounds and returned home it was getting dark. I sat alert in my studio. The phone rang. It was my friend, Miss Bates. There were four girls, no males, and no car in her family. She was worried. In a voice tense and urgent she asked, "Will you come down and get us if the Japs come?"

"You bet," I promised. "Er, what are you doing now?"

"Eating a duck dinner by candlelight under the dining room table," she said.

I hung up and went into the kitchen to look for some food. I found a can of French onion soup that had been purchased eight years before when I returned from la belle France and the spell of that country was still upon me. My house is an open job with plenty of windows, and I didn't have any blackout curtains, so I prepared the soup by the light of one small, gas burner. It was the sort of soup you make by pouring a confusing number of packages into the pot at timed intervals. Incredibly my nose soon smelled authentic onion soup (back to me came Les Halles after midnight with vegetables wonderfully arranged on the sidewalks for morning market). Even the croutons were provided for this pottage, and I floated them after pouring the soup into a bowl. Sprinkling the whole with cheese and turning off the gas, I then bore this fragrant bowl to the table, and set it down after carefully feeling for the table edge. I reached over to the sink for a spoon and felt my way back, but my eager fingers encountered nothing but the flat of the table. Quickly I lit a match, and there on the floor was my green sport coat steaming under a fine sauce of onion soup.

This was not to be all. The phone rang, and in a quick sprint across the studio I fell, raking my nose from stem to stern on the back of my only chair. I staggered to my feet, and picked up the receiver.

"Prepare to evacuate," came the voice of the chief warden, as he closed the line. This ultimatum produced in my mind the wildest sort of visions ranging all the way from the Exodus from Egypt to the Stampede of the Elephants in "Tarzan of the Apes", but instead of doing anything I simply sat on the floor and applied a handkerchief to my ruined beak.

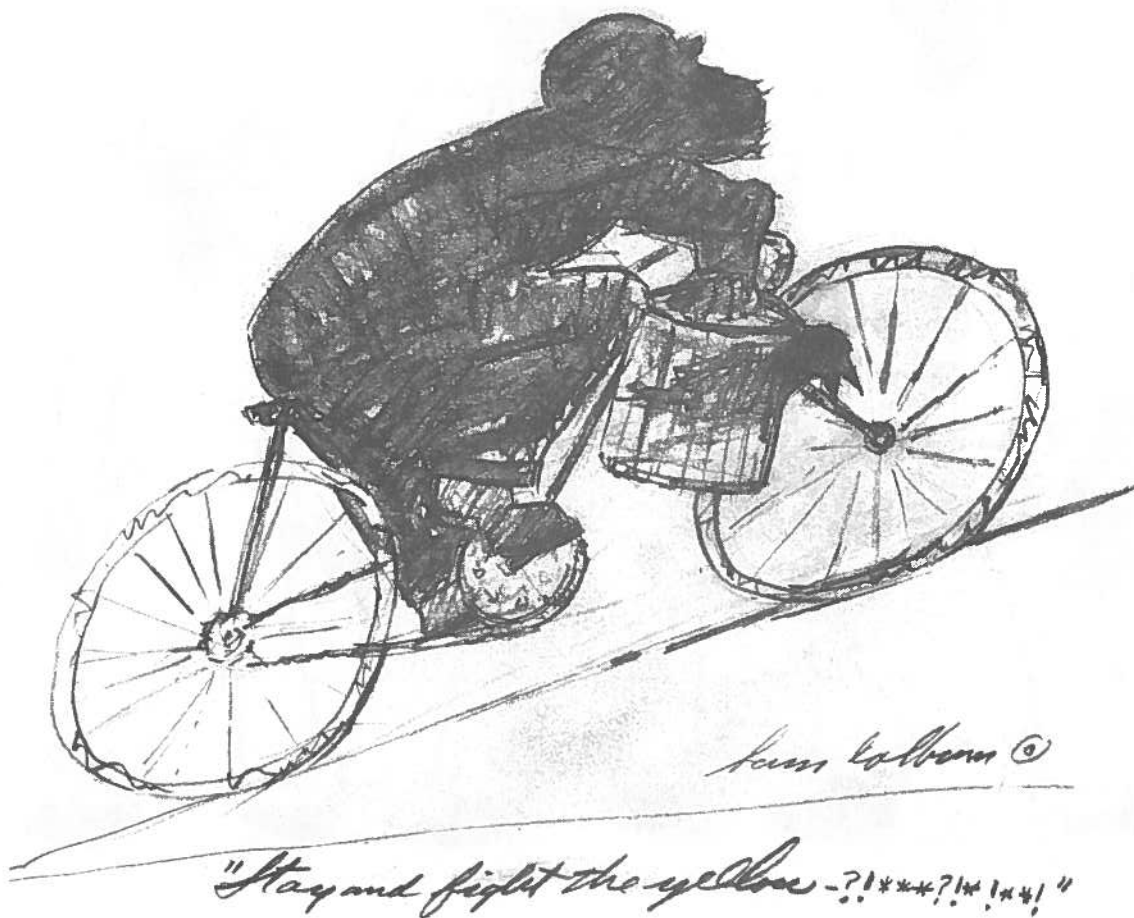
Not so immobile were Carmelites in other parts of town. Out of the headquarters of Civilian Defense sped a batch of Younger Boys screaming, "Evacuate, evacuate." The plug had been pulled. People spilled out of bars, drug stores, Walt's dairy, apartments and houses. Grandfather Nathan had his daughter and tiny granddaughter down in the car and on their way to Culps' up in the hills with a case of condensed milk and six dozen diapers in sixty seconds flat. A woman up in Hatton Fields started for the Del Monte Golf Course with nothing on but a nightgown. It took four men to get her back in the house. A gent with a full beard and a bald head was seen trying to make the Ocean Avenue hill out of the village on a bicycle, holding a caged parrot in one hand. The parrot was screaming, "Stay and fight the yellow-?!***?!*!***!"

Along with my Uncle Crumby, plenty of people got as far as Monterey before they came to, upon seeing that town lit up as usual. Most of the late starters never got over the crest of Ocean Avenue hill. Some who were on foot were just plain bushed. Others had taken the time to pull the light switch, turn off the gas under the water heater, and leave some food for the guppies; so by the time they got to the top of the hill, they encountered cars returning from Monterey with headlights ablaze. Those who turned on their radios caught the announcement that the whole thing had been called off. As for me, I was still sitting in the middle of my studio floor reclaiming my nose when the chief warden called to say that it was all a mistake.

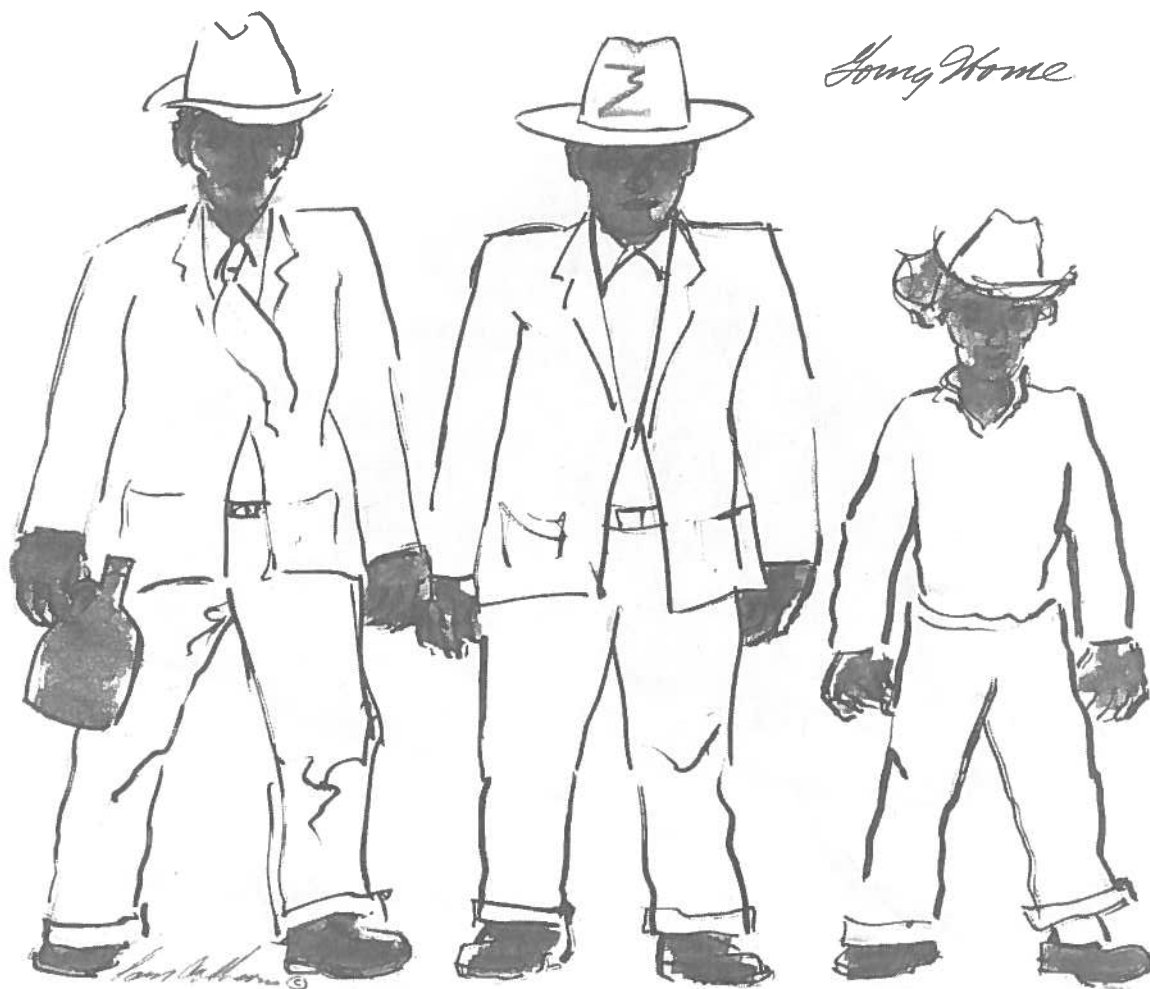
People were a little sheepish the next day. The local garage did a fine business hauling cars

out of ditches. Old Jake, the "Wino" had a lump on his noggin where he had collided with a pine tree on a direct line of flight from the Smoke Shop. I heard that one family over in Pebble Beach had driven all night, and ended up at dawn half a mile from their residence.

The much damned Office of Civilian Defense seemed at last vindicated when the story came through that on that day the Navy had started a covey of purse seiners down the coast from San Francisco. Maybe the branches of our armed service were still not too chummy because the tale is told that the Navy did not inform the Army about this excursion. As the ships went down the coast, civilian spotters, country constables, and village mayors began to report the presence of strange boats to the Army. By the time the seiners got as far south as Our Bay, they had multiplied into a fleet of one hundred fifty Japanese ships coming in to land invaders on Our Beach. The famous order, "Prepare to Evacuate", apparently came from the Army to Civilian Defense headquarters, and the least we can say, in retrospect, is that we Carmelites, as always, did our level best.



Carmel Valley Indians



Indians

When Father Serra and fellow Franciscans arrived by foot on the Monterey Peninsula, there were four thousand Indians living in the Carmel Valley. Indeed, the first church settlement in Monterey was succeeded by the beautiful San Carlos De Borromeo Mission built in the mouth of Carmel Valley as the Indians were the friars' best clients. In addition the feeling between the soldiers stationed at the Presidio and the Indians was hostile.

By the mid 1930's three Indians, brothers, were left in Carmel Valley which shows how the white man helped them develop. These three remnants were seen every day either walking down or up the valley, or at that wild den of boozing and dancing known as El Nido. Despite the laws of that time, they got wine. One saw them trudging alongside the road on the way back up the valley. They always had a jug of the red.

Two of the brothers were of medium height and stocky. Nature had managed to cheat the third. He was a runt — tiny and frail. They were very stolid, these Onessimos. Ordinarily they said little. Royden Martin gave them a ride up the valley one day. When they got in his car one of them said, "How are you"?

"I knew damn well they were drunk", said Roy.

By the 70's Alex was the only one left of the trio. He used the cab quite often, always appearing at the taxi stand as he probably could not use a phone. We drove him either to Monterey or to his little house up the Valley. His skin was certainly not red, but, rather, burnt umber in color — weathered and seamed by the centuries. His was the genetic inheritance of those endless years of exposure of the human body. The skin was different — almost like a lizard's.

Alex spoke English, but with a harsh, guttural accent. His dress was very plain, but neat- a dark suit, white shirt, and black hat. He never appeared in Carmel except to come to the cab stand.

"Carmel," he growled, "has no toilets." By that he meant no public facility. Sure, there is a big one at the foot of Ocean Avenue on the beach, but none in the business area except one maintained partially by the city on the third floor of the Plaza.

We, at the cab stand have not seen Alex Onessimo for several years. Maybe he can't find our new quarters. Maybe he was found dead like his brothers in the dry, creek bed of the Carmel River.

Broken Head

Willie van der Sluis had no idea the evening would end up as it did. He and his wife simply had a few drinks, and possibly a mad romp thru the house which ended in his falling against the Water Closet. It broke precipitating a flash flood. They turned off the water underneath the shattered chamber, mopped up, and went to bed.

Sam Colburn, unknown to them, and they to him, was trying to find a friend of his, Helen Watson, who was visiting in Carmel. As there is in Carmel a communal network of news, he soon found out that she was a guest in the van der Sluis house.

Willie was, the next morning, frantic to get a plumber. He phoned Waldo Hicks and Company, and Mrs. Hicks promised to send a man down immediately.

Sam, in the meantime, had set his course for the van der Sluis residence. He arrived at their house on Franciscan Way, and knocked on the door. Willie threw open the portal, and said, "Its right over there", and pointed to a door.

"What's over there", asked Sam?

"The bathroom", Willie replied.

"But I don't have to go", said Sam.

Hair Cutters

"Doc" Jones was not an artist or a writer or a member of the drinking class. He was, however, a village barber and had been snipping hair and shaving local faces in his parlour on Dolores Street since the '20s. Doc was not a Bohemian. His attire would have been commonplace in Keokuk, but in Carmel he was misplaced Americana. His black leather shoes were always shined, the black suit perfectly pressed, and a light gray Fedora worn straight on his head; his dress gave not an inch to the casual attire of other Carmelites. His fellow barber who worked the chair next to Doc's, was even more conventional. One never saw him on the street without the same light gray suit, and wearing a big Homburg of Prince Albert vintage.

Doc was a kind and thoughtful man who often went after work up to the hospital to shave some sick Carmelite for free.

Cultural events came and went in the village, but he was of sturdy stock and ignored this artistic flapdoodle. That is why it was so surprising to hear him say one day to the cab driver that he had been the night before to hear the great Rachmaninoff play at the Sunset Auditorium.

"Boy," says Doc, "That guy can certainly tickle the ivories."

Another village barber was Paul Mercurio. His tonsorial parlour was on Ocean Avenue in the '30's. One week the Carmel Pine Cone had Jim Thoburn, City Councilman, on the front page sitting in one of Paul's chairs, strumming a guitar, and wearing on his noggin a strange device. Underneath the photo the caption read, "Paul Mercurio will grow hair on every bald head in Carmel."

This device was a helmet with rubber tubes attached which led over to a pump. You got in the chair, Paul put this thing on your bald head. It had a big rubber band at the bottom to keep air from leaking out. When Paul started the motor the helmet filled with air and went up. Then the action reversed and the air was sucked out. This went on for fifteen minutes, and the treatment was over. The scalp was exercised all right. It turned pink, but nary one dormant follicle was encouraged to send up a new shoot.

Split Pea Soup

Carmel was a small but magical world before the second World War. It is true that Aimee Semple McPherson had attracted attention to the village. She discovered it as an ideal hideaway, but her visit was supposedly incognito. She managed to fit in her rendezvous somehow between the time she was swept into the ocean off the coast of Southern California, and came staggering out of the desert in Baja two weeks later.

Those of us who lived in this Piney Paradise knew we had gotten to heaven, and celebrated our divine status nearly every night. Our occasional sorties into the outer world were always



Sam Liffman '78 ©
"Paul Mercurio will grow hair on every bald
head in Carmel"



Sam Colburn ©

The incident of the Split Pea Soup

picturesque, and, of course incredibly funny. We pretended to know of no tolerable life south of the Big Sur. The only other communities that Carmelites recognized lay to the North. One of the towns in the Bay area was Milpitas. We never went there, but for some reason the mere mention of the name brought laughter. We certainly went to the city, and a necessary stop on the way was the town of Coyote which consisted of one very long bar. After reaching San Francisco we were attracted to the hotels, Palace, Fairmount, and St. Francis. High on the list also were the numerous Family Style restaurants such as the Hotel De France and the Iron Pot, the latter offering entertainment. So did the Bocce Ball Court which was popular with opera singers who ripped off many a fine aria.

Sam Colburn went to the City one time to see his friend, the glamorous ballet dancer, Mary Burr. In the late thirties she had materialized in Carmel, an absolute beauty, who turned the head of many a young buck. She was, unhappily for the rest of us, married to a robust, young baritone, John Burr. A couple of years later she left him, and had been getting up on her points ever since. She was in San Francisco with a ballet company on tour.

Sam did not take this delectable danseuse to a posh gin mill. They went to one of the family style restaurants somewhere, as he recalls it foggily, on Grant Street. This eatery did not have the long tables covered with white tablecloths. The patrons did not sit at common tables. Sam and Mary sat in a booth. The waiter set up the soup plates, and then arrived with a giant bowl of steaming split pea potage which he set on the edge of the table.

There was a postage stamp dance floor in the restaurant. Someone had put a nickel in the Juke box, and music flooded the room. Sam looked at Mary and said, "Let's dance."

"Swell," said Mary. She got up and so did he moving alongside the table to reach her. As he reached out to encircle this charmer, the hook on the soup ladle caught the pocket of his sport coat and swung out a full load of thick, yellow brown goo, dumping it on his backside.

Now Sam was the victim of this Missplacement of the Pea, and Mary had a fine sense of humor, but she did not laugh. In fact she never has laughed about it. This incident of the Split Pea has become one of his favorite stories. Of course if this had happened in Buellton, the Home of the Split Pea, the color would have been a nice, fresh green.



Waiting for Joe's Taxi #1



Sam Albarran
Waiting for Joe's Taxi #2



June 10, 1973

The Plaster Castle From
The Rear



Sam Colman

Waiting for Gels Taxi #3