

RHETORIC FARM

February 1988
Vol. II No. 1

FREE!



Cruising Dream Street

**BEST DISCS
PICKS FOR '87**

A LIMB CORNERS HIS PREY:
Jeff Keenan on Van Christian

GARBAGE

SKANK ON DOWN

POETRY REVIEWS REBARB

Mary's Nightmare

Falling through the cracks of the mental health system

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Photo by Mark D. Hundley

RHETORIC FARM

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Front Cover Photo by Kate Donovan

FROM THE STAFF

Welcome to the Farm. As you can see, we have expanded from a fanzine to newspaper size.

There are more stories, which now include non-fiction features, and more photography. We still feature plenty of poetry, fiction, music and, of course, the ever-popular Rebarb.

As well as expanding our pages, we've also increased the circulation from 1,000 to 3,000 copies.

Don't worry, though, Rhetoric Farm is still free in Tucson and Phoenix. Photocopies of back issues are \$1.50 and available from the usual address.

Advertising rates have gone up a bit, but the space has more than doubled. For those advertisers on a tight budget, we still have the cheapest ad in town — one-eighth of a page for \$10.

And as always, we want your feedback. Because we've got more room, we're counting on you, the reader, to help fill the space. Rhetoric Farm is currently accepting submissions for all departments: features, music, poetry and fiction, art and photography. Please enclose a contact address and/or phone number with your submissions.

Rhetoric Farm is starting a letter-to-the-editors column, so we want to hear from you — good or bad. Due to space limitations, Rhetoric Farm reserves the right to edit letters. All letters must be signed and include an address to be considered for publication.

A final note: if you go to an establishment after seeing it advertised in Rhetoric Farm, please mention that you saw it here. This will help keep Rhetoric Farm a free publication.

Hope to see you at the Farm.



it looked
bad, real
bad!!!

OBERC



then it
got out
of hand
!!!

OBERC

BACK ISSUES

All back issues of Rhetoric Farm (except issue 10) are available in photocopied form only, for \$1.50 each.

- 1: Henry Rollins/C. Clark Kissenger
- 2: Fishbone/D.C. 3
- 3: Mighty Sphincter/River Roses
- 4: Dream Syndicate/Fuzztones
- 5: Camper Van Beethoven/Del Fuegos
- 6: Mojo Nixon and Skid Roper/Raunch Hands
- 7: Keith Haring/The Johnnies (Pt. 1)
- 8: Firehose/The Johnnies (Pt. 2)
- 9: John Doe of X/Ru Paul
- 10: Meat Puppets/Cass Preston

DISTRIBUTION

Circulation is 3,000 copies per issue. The magazine is distributed free of charge in nightclubs and record, book and clothing stores throughout Tucson and Phoenix.

AD RATES

CENTERFOLD.....	\$200
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FULL PAGE.....	\$80
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QUARTER PAGE.....	\$20
EIGHTH PAGE.....	ONLY \$10

Ad layout and typesetting is available for an additional 20% of ad price.



Photo by Kate Donovan

Mary's Nightmare

Falling through the cracks of the mental health system

This story is a composite profile of three individuals known to the author who were diagnosed as having a personality disorder. Two of these individuals committed suicide. Their experiences, combined as they are in this story, show what happens to severely mentally ill, yet functional, people. While living with the agony of mental illness, these people disappear into the mainstream of society.

Only one percent of the American population suffers from incapacitating schizophrenia. Although it is recognized that these debilitated individuals are in need of the most care, there is a trend toward funneling mental health funds exclusively to care for these patients. As a result, the functional mentally ill are receiving less financial support to obtain much-needed aid.

- KJ Scotta

Mary's ordeal ended at a local crematorium. Mary's brother accepted the remains of his sister in plain ceramic jar.

"She was burned up long before this," Joe said. "I don't know whether to be really mad or to be relieved that it's over now. Someone could have helped her. Someone could have done something."

The problem with Mary was that her mental illness was not the kind that a lot of people notice. She never talked to herself, was always coherent and, until

the last three years of her life, held a responsible position with a large computer manufacturer. To everyone who knew Mary, she was moody but OK.

She wasn't quite OK, however. In 1980, after missing a lot of work due to severe depressions in which she would overdose on prescription drugs, the company she worked for demanded she see a psychiatrist.

That year, when Mary's nightmare began, she was 30 years old. She knew there was something wrong. She was afraid. In a letter to her brother in June 1980, Mary said she was afraid that she would lose her job if the psychiatrists diagnosed her as being mentally ill.

"I don't want people looking at me as if I was planning to commit mass murder. I just want to be all right again, and I'm terrified that they'll send me away to the State Hospital. Please don't ever let them do that Joe, please."

Mary was relieved when her psychiatrists told her she was not schizophrenic. Mary was diagnosed as suffering from borderline personality disorder, a difficult illness to define and treat. Mary's doctor said she exhibited characteristics of borderline behavior such as her severe depressions, drug abuse, extreme difficulty with relationships, sleep disorders and her habit of making unrealistic demands on herself and other people. The doctor said that anti-

depressant drugs would help ease some of the symptoms but that Mary would always have a difficult time.

Therapy was for the long haul.

After being put on medication and leaving the posh private hospital, she returned to work. For about six months things went smoothly for the most part. The side effects of the medication had subsided, but her mouth was always cottony and she sometimes felt as though things were happening as if in a movie. She complained to her doctor that she couldn't feel anything.

In February 1981, Mary became extremely discontented with the medication and her therapy. She began missing appointments and stopped taking her medication. In March, she began to burn her arms and legs with cigarettes and matches. By mid-April she was hospitalized again.

Mary's hospital stay lasted seven weeks. When she returned to work she was given a position with less responsibility and a cut in pay. Her co-workers, who never knew too much about Mary anyway, began to avoid her. Some even asked not to be put on the same projects. Each time her boss passed Mary's work station he would stop and watch her work, saying nothing. When she would turn to look at him, he averted his eyes and walked away.

Mary knew that her worst fears about her mental illness were unfolding

into reality. She knew her days as an independent and self-sufficient woman were almost over and she didn't intend to wait until her life turned to rubble.

In July 1983, Mary bought 300 Seconals, a strong sedative, and came within an eyelash of ending her life.

While in the psychiatric hospital, she was informed that she would be put on a three-week leave of absence from her job. If she did not return to work after that time, she would be terminated.

When Mary was released from the hospital five weeks later, she had no job, bills totalling \$2,800 and a new problem.

She was told that since her employer had terminated her after three weeks of hospitalization, her insurance would not cover the final two weeks and, unless she could pay the \$383 premium, her insurance would be cancelled.

The total bill for two weeks in the private facility was \$10,833 plus 20 percent of the four-week bill, according to her insurance agreement. That made the grand total \$16,055.

For the first time in her life, Mary was in debt.

By March 1984, Mary had exhausted her savings and was two months behind in her mortgage payment. She had paid the health insurance premium in order to stay in therapy with her psychiatrist.

by KJ Scotta

continued on page 7

At first the smell isn't so much metallic as it is sweet, an almost pleasant odor. A smell that, while my stomach turns, disappears — perceived accommodation. But each time a trash bag is ripped open, the smell is renewed. My stomach rolls. The waste slowly decays and ripens in the heat. That's when this peculiar treasure hunt in the garbage lot begins.

This is Le Projet Du Garbage at the University of Arizona. The place where "hands-on" means digging into a 16-pound trash bag, three times a day, separating and coding the contents.

On a sludge-stained table sits an open black plastic trash bag. Once the bag is ripped open, the flies arrive. Not swarms, but dozen or more. It takes 10 minutes for that smell to reach them and another five or six minutes of warmth to wake the maggots. They are the only life to emerge from the black plastic bag. Thick and white, they live off a rancid bag of cooked noodles (026/NOODLES pasta), of classified waste, about 60 grams worth.

It's sometime after the contents of the first trash bag are sorted, coded and weighed that, in the sun, the pockets of air between the rubber gloves and my fingers cause my hands to tingle. It's only condensation, but I removed the gloves once or twice. Remembering the maggots, I check, but find nothing.

Cigarette butts: Donna Winham, a veteran student garbologist, asks "Do you know what kind? Are they one-hundreds?" Wooden matches, diapers, beer and ketchup bottles, a tampon, a carrot, half-head of lettuce and cucumber peel.

No matter what's found in any bag, none of it can be kept by students, no matter how usable it may appear. This, according to one student, bothers some garbologists, whom she calls "packrats."

Entering William Rathje's office, down a short, narrow corridor, built up on each side with books and scientific papers, is like entering a burrow. His desk is swamped with more and more papers and a trashcan replica mug. Rathje, a professor of anthropology at the UA, runs, as the smock behind his desk says, Le Projet Du Garbage.

Before pawing through garbage, Rathje attended the UA and later Harvard where he received his Ph.D. He never planned on sorting trash. His dissertation was written about trade and burials in classic Maya society.

But not everyone could have their own Mayan burial site. And that's basically how this whole thing started. In 1971, Rathje was teaching archaeology at the UA. He wanted his class to check out a museum but there were too many students. Instead, he had the students come up with their own archaeological projects. Two went with trash. The class project started small: one student sorted only three bags.

More recently, a student undertook a project concerning the full moon and beer guzzling by correlating the number of beer cans in the trash with the phase of the moon. Unfortunately, his hypothesis, that a full moon reflects increased beer drinking, has yet to be proven. It appears that moon phases and beer drinking are independent phenomena.

by Jordan Gruener



Photo by Mark D. Hundley

Garbage

Since 1971, Rathje's taken the project on the road to Mexico City, Oakland, Detroit, Chicago and the Bahamas. Funding for the research has been provided by, among others, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Over the past 14 years, this is still the world's only ongoing garbage study. The project has recorded trash findings from almost 10,000 Tucson households. In an alley, in a trash can, the garbage becomes city property. And it's the city who trucks the stuff in. At 16 pounds per bag, 12 bags every four days, that's about 160,000 pounds of trash, and about 5,000 hours of sorting and coding over the past 14 years.

Tucson has its own distinctive statistics. Rathje has found that some Tucsonans are moving away from the traditional Thanksgiving turkey dinner. Those in more affluent areas are turning to prime rib and lobster. In Hispanic neighborhoods a turkey dinner is more than popular. It is used, Rathje says, to "validate their Americanness."

In neighborhoods where people drink hard liquor, they throw out the dregs of over-the-counter headache remedies; those who drink beer and have stomach problems toss, with their cans, Pepto Bismol bottles and Roloids wrappers.

Back at Le Projet Du Garbage, in this stinking garbage lot, Wilson Hughes, who's assistant director of garbology, drinks a Coors Light (086/BEER), and

watches 10 students separate and code.

The students who work here earn anthropology credits, depending on how many hours they work. Almost no one is paid. Rathje says he can't ask students to treat this as just another job. "They have to have the right kind of sense of humor and esprit de corps," he says. "Then you can pay them." Donna Winham and Gavin Archer have it.

Gavin Archer work up at 9:40 this morning, about 20 minutes before he had to be at the garbage project. Donna Winham, who lives farther away and got up 10 minutes later, arrived first. Archer is punchy, doesn't look as if he's showered. He weaves around the sorting table with a Circle-K coffee in one uncovered hand and three chewed-up meat bones from a trash bag in the other gloved hand. One looks like a human bone. He places it near his knee-cap, thinking it might fit. Winham, a graduate student working on a Ph.D. in medical anthropology, thinks the bone isn't and records the find (001/BONES) instead.

But the previous bag contained a chance to really speculate, not on bones, but on someone's lifestyle. When I first walked up, Archer, a senior in anthropology, pointed out what will become the day's find, sitting on the electronic scale. It's a small amount of marijuana (105/ILLICIT DRUGS), nearly a joint's worth. It was found in a bag

with a centerfold from a Playboy, a Victoria's Secret catalog, an assortment of dirty shirts and pants, and 81 Camel cigarette butts.

Archer says that this was most definitely a teenager's stash — parents search the room, dump the contents. He adds, "I prefer garbage to people when it comes to extracting information." Winham takes a drag off a Marlboro and counters, "It must be a single man, just cleaning house."

But that doesn't account for the unused marijuana. Neither guess really matters, though. The information gathered concerns only quantity, brand name, size and type. But, Winham says, "This gets rather routine after a while if you stop getting curious." So they don't.

The topic is dropped as a second bag is ripped open. Winham drinks a soda, eats chips, smokes and flicks pieces of trash with the end of a pencil. I never understand how she can drink, eat and smoke while she sorts the trash. But I accept it, and watch maggots twitch.

Jordan Gruener, publisher and an editor of Rhetoric Farm, is a junior in journalism at the University of Arizona. He has written freelance articles for several local publications.

STORIES FROM DOWN SOUTH — WAY DOWN SOUTH

as told by Rebarb

I was sitting with my friend, Clara, in a bar in San Blas, Mexico. She was going to tell me a story about her experience at breakfast that morning. But before she could open her mouth, two elderly American men started a fight with the waiter.

First, let me describe the bar. It was a "ladies' bar," that is, a bar where it's considered acceptable for women, escorted or not, to frequent without worry of being hassled by strange men or of tarnishing their reputation. The place was, in reality, an overpriced place for tourists. Named the "Ladies' Bar Playboy," it was decorated with mirrors that had beer logos and endorsements embossed on them (U.S. and Mexican brands mostly). Also, there were large posters of women in rigid poses of seduction: bathing suits, skin-tight short-shorts. Amidst these were portraits of Sylvester Stallone as Rambo, Arnold Schwarzenegger as The Terminator, and Chuck Norris as himself. Seeing all this, I wondered why Clara wanted to come here.

It seems that the elderly Americans had been drinking margaritas for some time and in their drunken sunset-years vacation stupor, they couldn't figure out why the waiter wouldn't speak to them in English. "What insolence! He's taking our money, and he won't even speak to us in English! Damn Mexicans!"

There is something strange that overcomes Americans when they leave their borders. It strikes even the most "liberal" and "open-minded." It is an immodest ethnocentricity that they spend the greater part of their excursion trying to uphold. For example, sitting down to a table in a restaurant in Honduras, Central America, an American friend of mine was shocked and amazed that there was no pepper on the table — just salt. He asked for pepper. He had on his face an expression that read, "Aren't these people backwards? What kind of restaurant is this? Can you believe it, no pepper?" What he failed to realize is that the people there didn't use pepper on the table; it wasn't part of their cuisine. I explained, but he still couldn't get over it, no pepper on the table!

It made me question why Americans spend so much money to travel just to expect other countries to be like the United States.

After the elderly gringos were pacified and induced to leave, Clara got on with her story.

"Like the craziest shit happened at breakfast this morning. It was crazy. We went to that restaurant McDonald's place. Why the fuck do they call it McDonald's? It's not even like a McDonald's. It's just another taco place.

"Anyway, we're going in there and like this woman is sitting at this other table crying her brains out. Yeah, an American woman, like thirty or forty or so, crying and

shit. It was like nine in the morning and like this woman is asking the waiter for a margarita. What a fucking case! So, she's sitting there crying, waiting for her breakfast margarita, and we're just sitting there with our noses stuck in the menus. You ever notice how greasy those things are there, fuck!

"Then this man and woman walk in. Yeah, fucking gringos with shorts and dorky sun-visor things. Well, they come in and start talking to the lady. Oh god, the man had one of those things, one of those electronic voice things, like his throat was fucked up so he had to use one of those things. Freaky fuckin' things.

"So, they start talking to the woman, and they're like from fuckin' A.A. and they're there to 'help her get back on her feet.' It was crazy. The woman keeps yelling at the waiter to bring her margarita and screaming at the two people that 'you don't know how it is, you don't understand' and shit.

"And the guy was going, 'just... take... it... one... day... at... a... time.' It was so creepy, that voice thing. We were like trying not to be there at all.

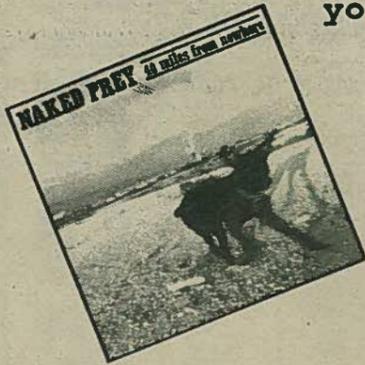
"One... day... at... a... time."

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from
nowhere

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But if you're from
around these parts,
you already know that.



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Poetry

EASY LIVIN

the corn is planted
and waiting for rain
the beans are in
the ground
and the milo
is going down

then it's flax
and oats
to cut
before another
go round of alfalfa

and somewhere in between
it's put up prairie hay
combine wheat
cull the cows
sell the feeder pigs
and lambs
at the
right time

disk and harrow

then cultivate
always cultivate
except for what we can spray
when we top dress with anhydrous
or later if it's not too expensive

and in our spare time
there's the show calves
and truck garden
to work
eggs to candle
and fences to mend
by then it will be time to plow
again

and those folks in town
think farmers
have it made

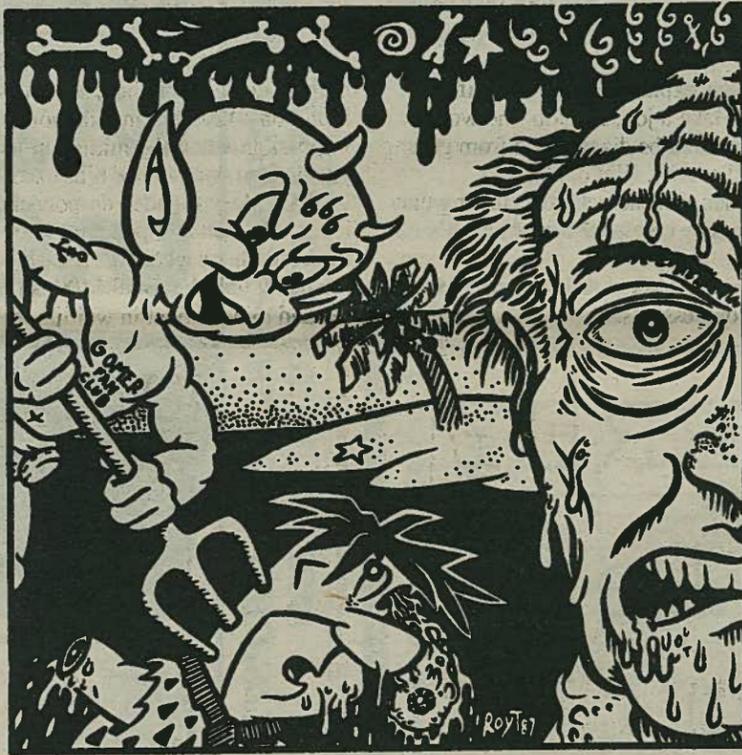
free food and all

SHERYL L. NELMS

GETTING THE LAST WORD

deeper) dogs have howled at moons
far more
yellow

JIM SPERANZA JR



PHOTOGRAPH

I put my
camera down
fast, quickly
cross the street
feet flutter highway
while behind me
trying to keep up
some wildman
screams
something about
permission.

LARRY OBERC

SUBWAY GIRLS

This girl standing
next to me
dressed all fancy
tells her friend
"Theres no way
I could go out
with a man who
wears a cheap watch."
I feel like
bashing her head
against the window
showing her my
watch, screaming
"Bitch! Look! Look!
See this shit?
I got it for
two bucks! Ordered
these vitamins
through the mail!
Got the watch
for free! Look!"
but I back off
behave myself
get off at
the next stop
knowing she's not
my kind of girl.

LARRY OBERC

SYPATHY FOR GOLIATH

clumsy & timid, called beast
by those damn Philistines
who tortured & teased
me
into a lonely bully,
i never would have hurt the kid,
standing there like he didn't have a
bone
to pick.

JIM SPERANZA JR

Mary's Nightmare

continued from page 3

However, she was forced to cut down on the number of sessions with her doctor because she was still responsible for 20 percent of her medical costs.

In early 1985, Mary was hospitalized again after another burning incident.

Mary was concerned about her insurance and asked the hospital accounting office to make sure everything was covered. After she had been in the hospital for 10 days, she was assured that everything had been taken care of.

Mary relaxed. She was determined to work very hard during the hospital stay and to do everything she was asked to do in cooperation with her doctors and therapists.

One afternoon Mary's psychiatrist commended her on the progress she had made. The doctor said a couple more weeks in the hospital and Mary would be ready to leave under a new outpatient therapy program.

The next day, a nurse told Mary she would be released later that afternoon. Mary was confused and asked to see her doctor.

The psychiatrist confirmed that Mary was being released immediately. When Mary inquired about the reason for the change in plans, the doctor said Mary's insurance company was refusing to pay any of the bills for the current stay because the hospitalization was due to a pre-existing illness and therefore not covered.

The bill for 39 days in the hospital was \$26,676 and Mary was responsible for all of it.

Her psychiatrist recommended that Mary apply to Social Security for a disability award. In November 1985, Mary filled out all the forms and was interviewed by a caseworker. Her medical reports were sent for review, and she was told it would take three months to determine her eligibility for the award. If approved, it would be at least another three months before she would receive a check. She would not be eligible for Medicare until she had been receiving disability payments for two years.

Mary panicked. She saw herself sinking further and further into a financial hole.

At Christmas that year, Mary called her brother in California. Joe was the only family member who hadn't given up on her, and she wanted to talk to someone, anyone, who believed in her. She tried to sound very up and excited about the holiday, but Joe heard the strain in her voice and asked what was wrong. She told him that the bank was repossessing her house and that her car, which she had managed to pay off, had broken down. She didn't have the money to fix it. Joe asked if she had found a job.

Mary explained to him that if she were to take a job, any job, she would automatically be disqualified from getting Social Security. Her doctor had demanded that she not work, feeling that the stress and pressure would make things worse for Mary, especially if she were unable to hold down a job because of her depressions.

Joe sent her his entire savings — \$2,100.

In February 1986, Mary was awarded a disability payment of \$420 per month. Her home had been repossessed and she was living in \$230-per-month studio apartment. She went to the Department of Economic Security to apply for food stamps but was denied because her income exceeded the agency's limit.

Although her disability checks would not begin until May and she had been living without income since 1984, the fact that she had medical insurance, a savings account and accepted money from her brother made her ineligible for food stamps and other social services.

In 1985, when her financial situation became desperate, Mary cashed a life insurance policy for \$900 and put the money into her savings account in an attempt to gain a little extra money to live on when the money her brother had sent ran out. As a result, her savings account balance in February 1985 showed a balance of \$930. Her car was valued at \$4,000 and the paperwork on her house repossession had not cleared the bank, so she was still listed as owner. All these factors combined to make Mary ineligible for financial assistance.

Mary wrote to Joe in early March saying that she could not make ends meet until May and even then, she knew that living on \$420 each month would be impossible when the minimum monthly payment on her medical bills exceeded \$1,000. Mary sounded despondent in her letter. She had dropped out of therapy even after her psychiatrist had agreed to see her at half the usual \$100 per hour fee and to be patient in waiting for

payment. Mary said in the letter that each session put her deeper into a financial grave and that she could not, in good conscience, add to her debt by continuing with the psychiatrist. She told her brother that she had called the community mental health agency but was told that unless she was in a crisis situation, she would have to be put on a one-year waiting list for services.

In that letter to Joe in March 1986, Mary said she didn't care what happened to her. She told her brother that she did not think she would survive.

On April 3, 1986, Mary took all the money she had left and bought a large quantity of drugs. She drove to a secluded area outside of town and swallowed all the pills. On April 11, while investigating her abandoned car, sheriff's deputies found her remains nearby. The deputies had grown suspicious because she had left her purse on the front seat.

Five days later, Mary's brother Joe sat in the anteroom of a crematorium waiting to take his sister home.

"She was a nice person, a giving person even when she had nothing. The damndest thing about how she died and why she died is that nobody but me knows she was here. All of those people, the doctors, the social workers — they just keep going, everyone just continues without missing a beat, as if she were never here."

KJ Scotta is currently on staff at the Tucson Citizen and is a master's candidate at the University of Arizona.



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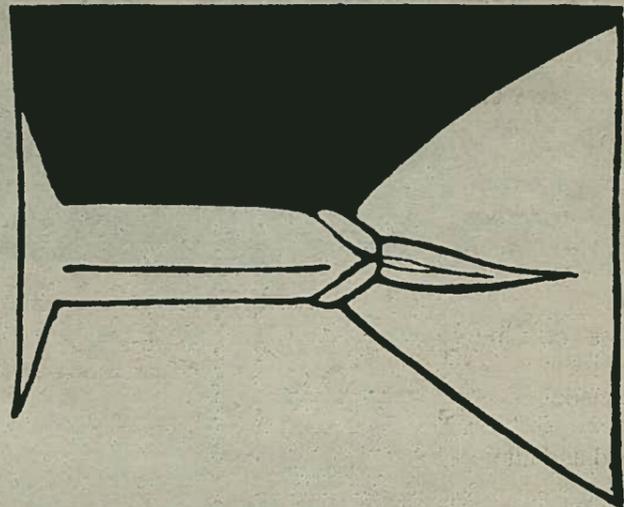
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