

Of mad dogs

and English-men

# It's a dog's life of fantasy, frustration and fog

By RICH VIVONE

Good morning, students. Welcome to Decipher 1968, a new course in analysis, deciphering and computing of the finer works of art of this era. Today, we shall begin with a poem by that eminent current day poet, Hammer N. Sickle. Our task will be to take this poem apart, word by word and sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase until we can understand the vital, electrifying message of the poet.

I shall read it aloud first.

## A Message

Hark, I hear a bark  
It is a dog  
on a log  
in the fog.

Okay, who wants to tell me exactly what the poet is talking about? Please be specific and don't beat about the bush.

No, he isn't talking about his dog. This, I think, is rather obvious. Please think before answering.

(A long silence).

Okay. I'll tell you what this is all about and using this as an example, we'll get into the others.

Now the first word "Hark" tells us to listen. The poet hears something and it is a message. There is also a sophisticated allusion to the Bible as is witnessed by the antiquated origins of the word.

Now, the rest of the first line tells us to be aware. The poet is listening intently and he hears the infinite wail of mankind crying to the heavens for relief. Man has been dealt the eternal swat and is uncomfortable.

The next line is the poet's profound statement on the state of man-

kind. "It is a dog," the poet says, and that's what the poet says we

are. Mankind is a howling dog, looking to the skies for a sign of heaven.

To sum up, the first two lines of this epic together tell us what life is all about. We are dogs which, needless to say, live a filthy life. And we are cowards because only cowards and children cry and it is not within reason to say we are children so by trial and error and cancellation we deduce that we are cowards.

The third line is beautifully symbolic. The log is a phallic symbol and we can say with some assurance that the poet is telling us that this is what man is hollering about. He has lost his sexual prowess and ability and his duty to function as a man. Notice the poet has placed the log as a floor for the dog to howl from. He is saying that this is the one necessity of man—sexuality.

The last line sums up the entire work of art. The fog is symbolic of a mist and man is lost in the cloud of nature. He may be lost, period. The fog allusion brings a whole atmosphere of uncertainty to the poem.

To conclude, I say that this is the most pessimistic poem I have ever studied. The poet has no hope for mankind. We are lost and howling like a dog in fog and there is no way out. Our constant misuse of sex and its purpose has robbed man of his one distinctive quality—the ability to reproduce. Thus, he is reduced to the state of an animal on a log.

Now, that is rather straight forward; let's try his second poem which is not so pessimistic. It is entitled "War" and the one word poem is "Vietnam." This is more like it. What is the poet telling us?



—Neil Driscoll photo

HARK, I HEAR A BARK

... it is a dog, on a log, in the fog

## What do you mean, 'not qualified' — I went to university

By RICH VIVONE

Good afternoon, sir, he said. My name is I. B. Em and I'm looking for some work. Can you help me?

Well, that's what I'm here for. Just sit yourself down and tell me about yourself. For openers, you can tell me what you can do or what qualifications you have. We have a few openings and perhaps I can fit you in.

I have no unique talents, he said. I can do most anything if I put my mind to it. Sometimes it takes some time to get used to a post but I can usually get it right after a while.

Qualifications? He still had not told me what he could do either.

I spent most of my time in universities, he said. I have a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta. You know where that is, I sup-

pose. I took a major in mathematics, a minor in physics, a sub-minor in football and a sub-sub-minor in protesting. They haven't been too handy though. So I took a master's degree in English at the University of San Francisco. It took six years but I made it. See this here plastic card. It says "Master's Degree in English Literature."

That's fine, I said. What other qualifications do you have? Something useful, of course.

Well, he began, I studied abortive agriculture, normal psychology, social pathology and extra obvious neuroticisms. But I haven't a degree in any of these. Just sort of extra-curricular activities. You know how it is, a guy gets interested in some things and has to work at them.

What, I said again, can you do?

Hold on. I know more yet.

I studied classical Greek literature and translated Homer into Mongolian and Chinese and Eskimo. I took these languages while attending schools at these various countries. The Eskimo I learned while lost on an exploiting trip to the north. They liked Homer. Give me a sec to remember more. Oh yes, I have studied diligently the abstract origins of the mongoose, the Nipigo-noose and the robin of which the latter was the most difficult. I also became acquainted with the Alberta road-hog but my results were censored because their peculiar mating habits embarrassed the government.

I am very impressed, I said yawning, but you have yet to say what you can do. Your qualifications are nice but there must be something you can do. How about truck driving? I have three fine openings for Euclid drivers. Union wages, isolation pay, work

day limited to 24 hours and the usual fringe benefits.

Well, he said. I have studied the finer mechanisms of this automobile and know it uses 2.6% ethanol, 4.7% alcohol, 4.9% tetrahol, 12.4% oil and the rest mentoline in its gasoline system. There's diesel fuel too, of course.

This truck also is manufactured by Euclid Industries, Inc., founded by Bill Euclid in 1920 for a special commission of the Canadian Armed Services for duty in Edmonton, Alberta because the excessively miserable weather made human slavery impossible. The truck has 109 gears forward and works on a quintuple clutch system. It's piston ratio is . . .

Hold it, I said. That's very impressive. But can you drive it? That's the necessary part.

Drive it, he shrieked, what do you think I am? I who have a Ph.D. from St. Step-

hen's College with a dissertation done in pig-Arabian to which I translated the speeches of Ernest C. Manning, supreme being in Alberta, and more study in Burmese, Vietnamese, Australianese, Niponese, Bunyoroese and Gururumba-ese. And you ask if I can drive a truck?

Well, can you? What can you do?

You ask what I can do. Dolt! I have conquered 6 English women, 196 Italian women, 285 British women, 687 Swedish women, 1 Alberta woman and 6,048 Africans and you ask what I can do. Scum of the earth. Wick-ed trash.

Do you know what this is, I asked, handing him a shovel?

Looks like a Tyrolean beer stirrer but I'm not sure. However I can read the handle. It says "Made at the University of Alberta for educational purposes."