

# FEAR AND LOATHING

Editor's Note: Raoul Duke, a.k.a. Duke, a.k.a. Doctor Gonzo, in actuality Hunter S. Thompson, is coming to Dal this March 15 for an 8 p.m. "lecture" in the McInnes Room of the SUB. The following is the text of an encounter Paul Kaihla had with the man.

By Paul Kaihla

They came together on a hot afternoon in Los Angeles, howling and clawing at each other like wild beasts in heat. Under a brown California sky, the fierceness of their struggle brought tears to the eyes of 90,000 God-fearing far...

They were twenty-two men who were somehow more than men. They were giants, idols, titans... And they yearned for the Ultimate Glory, the Great Prize, the Final Fruits of a long and vicious campaign.

Victory in the Super Bowl: \$15,000 each.

They could almost taste it. The smell was stronger than a ton of rotten mangoes. Their nerves burned like open sores on a tog's neck. White knuckles. Wild eyes. Strange fluid welled up in their throats, with a taste far sharper than bile.

Thompson hasn't been heard from much in the past while. He hasn't written for Rolling Stone in more than four years. But he'll soon have two books out on the market: The Curse of Lono — a collaborative effort with British illustrator Ralph Steadman, who's done drawings for Thompson's books and articles since 1970 when Gonzo Journalism was first invented — and a novel called The Silk Road.

Thompson still lives in the arid hills of Colorado near Aspen, where he caused a minor revolt 13 years ago when he ran for sheriff on the "freak power" ticket. He drew national media attention after shaving his head bald and announcing he would take hallucinogenic drugs while on duty if elected, and rip up the streets with jackhammers. "The yahoos were convinced the Anti-Christ had finally appeared — right there in Aspen," Thompson said shortly after his narrow loss.

Thompson has given up the Doberman Pincers and barbed wire coils which once guarded his cabin. His crabgrass yard is livened up by a half-dozen odd peacocks which stop their strutting only to give visitors an occasional large-eyed glance.

A large Cinzano umbrella which looks as if it were swiped from an Aspen sidewalk cafe, rests on his porch. Inside is a twisted metal sculpture called "The Next President," a Ralph Steadman drawing of Bob Dylan, curtains made from American flags, and an 80-speaker stereo system.

When I met Thompson he was livid over an article about him which had appeared in the Toronto Star some weeks earlier. There was a large element of slander in it and he'd become

very leery of Canadians in general. After an evening of preliminary discussion and debauchery in the local Holiday Inn lounge, Thompson advised me to fetch him the next day at 1:00 p.m. to do the interview. "I'll just be getting up and will be very crabby, so don't get upset if I call you a pigfucker or other nasty things when you bang on the door," he said.

He also suggested a good way to jar his mind into the proper gear for talking serious politics; "Just ask me if Frank Mankiewicz is an honest man..." (Mankiewicz is a friend of Thompson from the 1972 presidential campaign, and an old fixer on the left of the Democratic Party).

What follows is a candid text of Thompson's views on the Toronto Star, Gonzo Journalism, the state of American politics, Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, the '72 campaign, George McGovern, and the integrity of Frank Mankiewicz.

Thompson: This is mine right? (pointing to one of the several drinks on the table) Q: They're all yours. I know you're anxious to talk about the honesty of Frank Mankiewicz, but there's one thing we have to clear up first...

Thompson: Why don't we talk

about the Toronto Star first? Q: That's what I was going to bring up. Thompson: I want this very precise. Is your mike picking this up? Q: Ya.

Thompson: You know, I've always had a certain affection for the Toronto Star. But...what's that guy's name? Q: John Picton. Thompson: Well, Picton came down here and got very drunk. What he did to me was on the same level as, say, you going back and bouncing a check on me (the Doctor had cashed a personal check for me), and then writing that I bounced a check on you. Picton actually reported that I, covering politics for Rolling Stone, exchanged mentions of politicians for favors involving sex and drugs. There was never any mention of that, and that kind of accusation strikes at the very heart of my kind of journalism.

I probably should sue, or maybe write letters to the editor — we all know how much good that does — but the whole thing punched a serious hole in my regard for the Star and Canadian journalism in general. I think he was just trying to out-Gonzo me. But really, if you can't write Gonzo journalism, you shouldn't write it at all. And drunken Irishmen shouldn't be

sent down to drink with me unless they're in good shape — this one couldn't drink and he can't write.

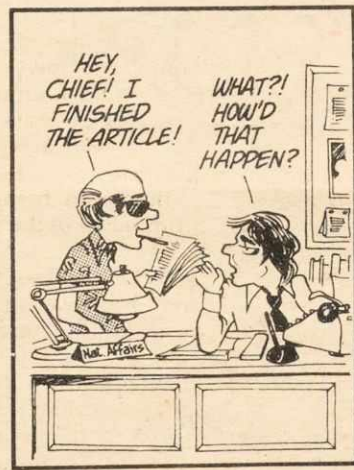
Q: So you've been pretty leery of Canadian journalists, eh? Thompson: Wouldn't you after that? I don't mind being flogged and flayed in print — Time magazine beats the shit out of me all the time — but that strikes me as being one of the worst insults I've ever had.

Q: I should mention your new book in my story. Thompson: That's The Silk Road, my notion of the road we've been travelling to get where we are now — which is a bad place. It's a book about the Haitian Freedom Flotilla — when a hundred Cuban refugees flooded Key West — that's the background of the novel The Silk Road is also a metaphor for the ocean.

Q: What has the lull in your writing in the past few years been, a vacation, or a block? Thompson: Ahhh, more like giving up journalism. I keep giving up journalism. I gave up journalism before every book I've done. I've given up journalism once again.

What I missed about not doing journalism is the sense of getting interested in that story you see on the Atlanta news at maybe four in the morning, and picking up the phone and saying I want to go to Sudan and talk to Arafat. I've done things like going to Saigon; all the stories have been fast judgements. I miss the sense of being involved, but the price you pay for it is writing hurried, unedited stuff — having first drafts appear.

Q: Well that's gonzo, to go with the first draft. Thompson: Well, not in the case of the Vegas book. That's about four or five drafts, the last time I



ever did that. But you suddenly realize that everything you write, like at four in the morning when you've been up for three days, will end up in libraries and, you know, your children will read it — which takes all the fun out of it.

Q: Let's get to the main topic: how would you compare the zeitgeist of the Eighties to that of the Sixties? Thompson: Well it's a different time in the sense that as a gambler, the odds politically, culturally, or even personally, are much higher now against taking risks, doing new things and have new ideas. It just appears to be a time of... Q: Digging into the trenches? Thompson: Ya, cheapness, meanness and fear. This is the time of fear and loathing really; this is the generation we've been wait-

ing for. This is the Herpes Generation

Q: What do you see as the time period of the Sixties? Thompson: I would say from 1960, the time of the first Nixon-Kennedy debate, to the time of Nixon's disappearance. The euphoria lasted into '75, but somehow all the hopefulness that came out of Watergate — that the system does work — we've cured the ills — has just turned out to be an illusion. The graph should have started going up after we got rid of Nixon, but instead of that there was just kind of a jagged peak, and then the graph went down again. It's been going down ever since.

Q: Why? Thompson: Well, Jimmy Carter didn't do anybody any good. I happen to be, not a liberal, or a Democrat for that matter...I'm sort of an anarchist. But I still believe that if after Nixon, Carter or any other Democrat could have come in and demonstrated a real sense of achievement — that things would get better for everybody and not just the rich — we would be living in a different time today.

Q: Through Rolling Stone you were the earliest and most outspoken supporter of Carter. Did he deceive you? Thompson: I think Carter deceived himself as much as he deceived anyone else. I have 12 hours of tape of Carter in his living room in Plains in '74. I would still endorse his aspirations, which I believe were pure and real, but it's a very sad thing to listen to Carter saying to me in his living room in '74 how he's going to run the country based on a few random successes in running Georgia. The voice sounds like a teenager — a civics student in high school.

Carter was essentially an anal-retentive military freak who could play Georgia politics, but not national politics. It's not that fucking hard to go into Washington and function — you could do it. You take it for granted that people are against you. That's part of the game. I think Carter was surprised that people were not going to pave the streets with peanuts or something.

I've never done anything with those tapes; I was thinking of doing something with them —

Q: In that campaign you were the earliest and most outspoken supporter of McGovern (who lost the election by a landslide to Richard Nixon); have you gone as sour on him as you have on Carter? Thompson: George McGovern is one of the most decent men I've met anywhere. Bobby Kennedy once described him as "the most decent man in the Senate." He's a class act on his own...and you know, you don't find men in politics like that very often. To be described as "the most decent man in the Senate" is getting to be a smaller and smaller compliment now that we're find-

ing out they're all crooks, degenerates, swine, and thieves.

Q: It's no secret that McGovern's thinking of running in '84; what odds would you give him for getting the nomination? Thompson: I'd take McGovern at 100 to 1 — which is what I game him in '72 when he did win the nomination — and (Colorado Senator) Gary Hart at 50 to 1.

Q: You've been spreading a rumor that Richard Nixon might have the gall to run also. Thompson: (In a brooding tone) I never thought he was gone... never.

Q: What would that mean for you? Thompson: If Nixon ran again... Fuck, I'd sell the ranch and pay my own expenses. I would set up a bureau and kick out the jams! You know, fuck the libel laws, to hell with the courts. I don't think I could stand to cover another campaign, but Nixon running would do it.

There might not be any difference between Reagan and Nixon in terms of who runs for President, except for that Nixon believed he was in charge — it never occurred to Reagan. Reagan's just an overworked salesman... all those dumb movies, Governor of California, working for G.E. for 10 years peddling light bulbs.

Nixon is a more complex and ambitious type of monster. He's like a dog that might go mad. You can program it, but you can't guarantee it. He went out one morning at five o'clock drunk as a loon — I mean berserk drunk. He'd been pacing around the White House while anti-war demonstrators were outside by the Washington Monument, and insisted that a phalanx of Secret Service agents be woken up. The President wanted to go and talk to those kids out there, who were there for a very serious demonstration. And that crazy bastard lurched out into the streets, had himself kind of propped up and dragged down them all, and wandered around the crowds.

There he was spitting gin bubbles and talking about football and the good old days — completely nuts. People weren't even sure if it was him. Nobody cared. Nobody even pointed a stick at him, much less a gun. You couldn't shoot a fool like that. But they shot both Kennedys. And they even shot Reagan. Now it's about time we started saying "we" shot those people.

Q: Well, I think Carter deceived himself as much as he deceived anyone else. I have 12 hours of tape of Carter in his living room in Plains in '74. I would still endorse his aspirations, which I believe were pure and real, but it's a very sad thing to listen to Carter saying to me in his living room in '74 how he's going to run the country based on a few random successes in running Georgia. The voice sounds like a teenager — a civics student in high school.

Carter was essentially an anal-retentive military freak who could play Georgia politics, but not national politics. It's not that fucking hard to go into Washington and function — you could do it. You take it for granted that people are against you. That's part of the game. I think Carter was surprised that people were not going to pave the streets with peanuts or something.

I've never done anything with those tapes; I was thinking of doing something with them —

Q: In that campaign you were the earliest and most outspoken supporter of McGovern (who lost the election by a landslide to Richard Nixon); have you gone as sour on him as you have on Carter? Thompson: George McGovern is one of the most decent men I've met anywhere. Bobby Kennedy once described him as "the most decent man in the Senate." He's a class act on his own...and you know, you don't find men in politics like that very often. To be described as "the most decent man in the Senate" is getting to be a smaller and smaller compliment now that we're find-

ing out they're all crooks, degenerates, swine, and thieves.

Q: It's no secret that McGovern's thinking of running in '84; what odds would you give him for getting the nomination? Thompson: I'd take McGovern at 100 to 1 — which is what I game him in '72 when he did win the nomination — and (Colorado Senator) Gary Hart at 50 to 1.

Q: You've been spreading a rumor that Richard Nixon might have the gall to run also. Thompson: (In a brooding tone) I never thought he was gone... never.

Q: What would that mean for you? Thompson: If Nixon ran again... Fuck, I'd sell the ranch and pay my own expenses. I would set up a bureau and kick out the jams! You know, fuck the libel laws, to hell with the courts. I don't think I could stand to cover another campaign, but Nixon running would do it.

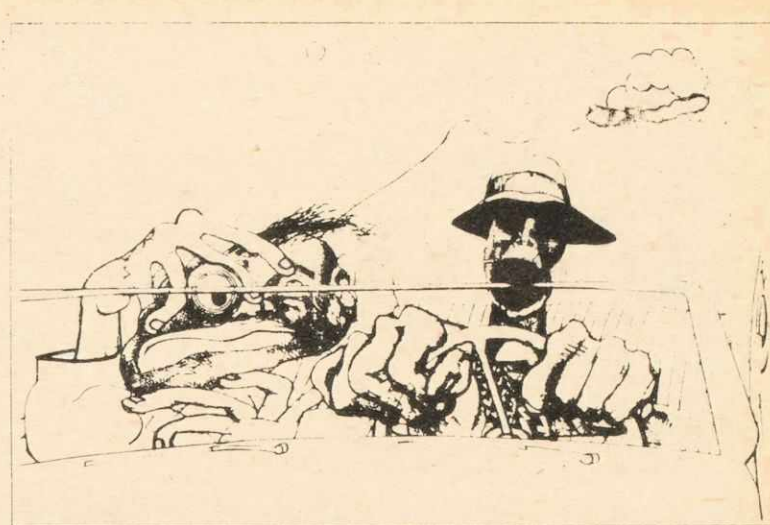
There might not be any difference between Reagan and Nixon in terms of who runs for President, except for that Nixon believed he was in charge — it never occurred to Reagan. Reagan's just an overworked salesman... all those dumb movies, Governor of California, working for G.E. for 10 years peddling light bulbs.

Nixon is a more complex and ambitious type of monster. He's like a dog that might go mad. You can program it, but you can't guarantee it. He went out one morning at five o'clock drunk as a loon — I mean berserk drunk. He'd been pacing around the White House while anti-war demonstrators were outside by the Washington Monument, and insisted that a phalanx of Secret Service agents be woken up. The President wanted to go and talk to those kids out there, who were there for a very serious demonstration. And that crazy bastard lurched out into the streets, had himself kind of propped up and dragged down them all, and wandered around the crowds.

There he was spitting gin bubbles and talking about football and the good old days — completely nuts. People weren't even sure if it was him. Nobody cared. Nobody even pointed a stick at him, much less a gun. You couldn't shoot a fool like that. But they shot both Kennedys. And they even shot Reagan. Now it's about time we started saying "we" shot those people.

Q: Well now we have Reagan. Do you see him as an extension of what you called "The rotten, fascist context of what was happening to America" under Nixon? Thompson: It's called profit-taking. I see the whole Administration as just a profit-taking operation. Ya, the ship's sinking, it's

maybe selling them back to Carter.



Q: Well, I think Carter deceived himself as much as he deceived anyone else. I have 12 hours of tape of Carter in his living room in Plains in '74. I would still endorse his aspirations, which I believe were pure and real, but it's a very sad thing to listen to Carter saying to me in his living room in '74 how he's going to run the country based on a few random successes in running Georgia. The voice sounds like a teenager — a civics student in high school.

Carter was essentially an anal-retentive military freak who could play Georgia politics, but not national politics. It's not that fucking hard to go into Washington and function — you could do it. You take it for granted that people are against you. That's part of the game. I think Carter was surprised that people were not going to pave the streets with peanuts or something.

I've never done anything with those tapes; I was thinking of doing something with them —

Q: In that campaign you were the earliest and most outspoken supporter of McGovern (who lost the election by a landslide to Richard Nixon); have you gone as sour on him as you have on Carter? Thompson: George McGovern is one of the most decent men I've met anywhere. Bobby Kennedy once described him as "the most decent man in the Senate." He's a class act on his own...and you know, you don't find men in politics like that very often. To be described as "the most decent man in the Senate" is getting to be a smaller and smaller compliment now that we're find-

ing out they're all crooks, degenerates, swine, and thieves.

Q: It's no secret that McGovern's thinking of running in '84; what odds would you give him for getting the nomination? Thompson: I'd take McGovern at 100 to 1 — which is what I game him in '72 when he did win the nomination — and (Colorado Senator) Gary Hart at 50 to 1.

Q: You've been spreading a rumor that Richard Nixon might have the gall to run also. Thompson: (In a brooding tone) I never thought he was gone... never.

Q: What would that mean for you? Thompson: If Nixon ran again... Fuck, I'd sell the ranch and pay my own expenses. I would set up a bureau and kick out the jams! You know, fuck the libel laws, to hell with the courts. I don't think I could stand to cover another campaign, but Nixon running would do it.

There might not be any difference between Reagan and Nixon in terms of who runs for President, except for that Nixon believed he was in charge — it never occurred to Reagan. Reagan's just an overworked salesman... all those dumb movies, Governor of California, working for G.E. for 10 years peddling light bulbs.

Nixon is a more complex and ambitious type of monster. He's like a dog that might go mad. You can program it, but you can't guarantee it. He went out one morning at five o'clock drunk as a loon — I mean berserk drunk. He'd been pacing around the White House while anti-war demonstrators were outside by the Washington Monument, and insisted that a phalanx of Secret Service agents be woken up. The President wanted to go and talk to those kids out there, who were there for a very serious demonstration. And that crazy bastard lurched out into the streets, had himself kind of propped up and dragged down them all, and wandered around the crowds.

There he was spitting gin bubbles and talking about football and the good old days — completely nuts. People weren't even sure if it was him. Nobody cared. Nobody even pointed a stick at him, much less a gun. You couldn't shoot a fool like that. But they shot both Kennedys. And they even shot Reagan. Now it's about time we started saying "we" shot those people.



R.S.T.

Illustration by Ralph Steadman, used without his knowledge or consent.