

CORRESPONDENCE LOVE LETTERS & ADVICE

AD NAUSEUM:

John Anderson's article on the soul of Pat Boone's white bucks ("Rock 'n' Roll's Great White Buck," RS 205) calls to mind the resurrected rocker's visit to our small campus in Rice Lake, Wisconsin, in 1968 as part of one of his flash-in-the-pan land development projects in the area, and our good mayor's wrestling of a few unaccompanied verses of "Love Letters in the Sand" from the superannuated superstar. Deeply moved by the article, I promptly blew lunch into my new slow cooker, purchased after receiving the Boone family's inspirational commercial message on the product into my heart, the profits of which, well, see Matthew, chapter 6.

JIM SLAUSON
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

The article on Pat Boone says, "You've heard of speaking in tongues. It sounds like gibberish to most people but often turns out to be ancient Arabic or some other exotic language. In Shirley's case it was Latin, which she had never studied a day in her life."

Linguists have made tape recordings of Pentecostal Christians speaking in tongues, and have analyzed the contents of the speech. I know of no research showing that speakers of tongues spoke in non-native or unfamiliar languages.

HAMILTON GREGORY
El Paso, Texas

IT'S A MIRACLE

It's a miracle, *ROLLING STONE* with an article on the Jefferson Starship (RS 203), and a good one too!! Despite the fact that you published it only because they've been making it commercially again, thank you... even though they have been making sophisticated, invigorating, avant-garde rock music all along.

MICHAEL ZANONI
Lodi, California

PRO & COE

This is in regard to your put-down article on David Allan Coe's prison record (RS 203, 205).

Did you check out *also* the good he has done for prisoners—his publishing company to publish inmates' songs or his award from the State of Tennessee for efforts to help, i.e.,

the Seven Step Rehabilitation Program?

He never cheated the public if he lied about his past, he only used it as a vehicle to bring some good music to the public.

Maybe the years he was in prison seemed like 20 years to him!

DONALD K. JONES
Melbourne, Florida

Was really surprised to see another article on David A. Coe. And this time a little more of the truth—or "bullshit" as Shelby Singleton puts it.

After my husband and I read the first article on him, we had the biggest laugh we'd had in days. Coe and Betty sponged off of us for about two months back in 1968.

We lived in Ashland, Ohio, then. And by the way, he was never the president of an outlaw motorcycle gang either. My old man was. And the bike he was riding was a baby Yamaha, also my old man's. And yes, he sure is a very convincing storyteller; sure seems like everyone bought everything he said until now. But us.

KAREN S. LIGHTFOOT
Galion, Ohio

BIG DITCH DIPLOMACY

The issue of Panama ("Panama's Imperial Canal," RS 203) is an increasingly important one which the American press has failed to give appropriate coverage. As recent visitors to Panama and students of its history, social structure and politics, we would like to add to the information and analysis that Jan Morris provides.

Panama's arrangement with Bunau-Varilla, described as one in which the Frenchman would negotiate the canal concession "for cash and protection," was in fact the newly independent Panama's first betrayal by the imperialist powers. The Panamanians desired independence from Colombia, and Bunau-Varilla, on behalf of the U.S., offered them a guarantee of independence by the assurance of gunboats stationed near Colombia, in return for a canal treaty that the Panamanians would help to create. The treaty, however, was signed and delivered to Washington before the Panamanian negotiating team had arrived at the table.

Another important moment is less than accurately represented as "an affray" in 1964. On the 9th of January, Panamanian students chose to carry

out their legal right to fly the Panamanian flag in the Canal Zone. The Zionians attempted to thwart their efforts, and in the ensuing struggle the U.S. Army shot and killed 22 Panamanians. In the days that followed over 600 were wounded. Panama cut off diplomatic relations with the U.S., and the imperial negotiators came running to the bargaining table.

This year, the 9th of January was commemorated in events organized by the Committee for Panamanian Sovereignty.

The committee grew out of a trip last October of 40 North Americans who visited Panama as its guests for ten days. We were overwhelmed by the amount of support for the Torrijos regime's strong stand against the U.S. colonial presence. We saw how the U.S. involvement has distorted Panama's development by encouraging dependency and by keeping the country from developing other resources for its own use.

MARIAN McDONALD
Cambridge, Massachusetts

IMPRESSIONS OF SPAIN

I was in Spain last summer and vividly remember the chilling sight of the Guardia Civil patrolling the streets of Barcelona, swinging those menacing machine guns under their arms, welcoming the latest batch of tourists who had crossed the border at Port-Bou.

I remember sitting in the Plaza Mayor in Madrid, drinking early into the morning with a young Spaniard and a couple from Berlin. The Spaniard cautioned us not to sing too loudly since such noise might draw the police. One of the Germans cursed "fascist Franco" while the Spaniard hung his head.

And I remember Pamplona and the running of the bulls, a great spectacle staged in the heart of the Basque country. "Franco would never come here," a Pamplona youth proudly boasted to me. "If he did, there would be bombs."

The people of Spain are friendly and travel here intrigues. It is indeed a country to watch, hopefully for readers of *ROLLING STONE*, through future dispatches by writers like Donald Katz ("Dispatch from the Valley of the Fallen," RS 205).

FREDERICK BURGER
Marietta, Georgia

A BLUE NOTE

Hound Dog Taylor and Arthur Crudup could have used some *ROLLING STONE* publicity while they were still around.

I'd speculate that over half your readers never heard of either man until their obits appeared. How about some positive publicity for the black bluesman for a change? Don't wait until he's dead to sing his song. I expect more from RS.

LIZ PEARL
Tucson, Arizona

We made a New Year's Resolution to do more than play the hits. Sorry it didn't do Howlin' Wolf any good.—Ed.

ERRATA

With regard to the story of the yachtjacking, the statement was

made falsely that a stripped hulk of a vessel was found off the coast of Bolivia. My maps tell me that this is a nice trick, since Bolivia is a landlocked country. Otherwise, the story was the kind of hard-nosed reporting I expect to see more frequently in *ROLLING STONE*.

BILL LAVELETTE
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Okay, okay, so that one was a skyjacking.—Ed.

In my Pat Boone story I stated that Wilt Chamberlain was among the several hundred sinners whom Pat baptized in his pool. I have since learned that this is not true. Although Wilt had an injured knee cured as the result of prayer at the Boones', he never was baptized there. I apologize for the error.

—John B. Anderson

THE PVC CONTROVERSY

THE COMPANY LINE

We have read with considerable interest "The Plastic Coffin of Charlie Arthur," in your January 15th issue (RS 204). The article contains errors of fact and omissions but, more importantly, it accuses B.F. Goodrich officials of trying to cover up a critical problem. The following corrections of some of the more important inaccuracies indicate the flaws in your article.

ITEM: "Maltoni was working for a group of European chemical manufacturers who wanted his findings kept secret. The American companies were all too happy to agree—so for the year before the Goodrich announcement the companies covered up Maltoni's findings that vinyl chloride caused cancer" (page 44, Col. 4).

FACT: In late 1972 companies in the Manufacturing Chemists Association were planning studies to evaluate findings that rats subjected to 30,000 parts vinyl chloride per million had developed tumors. Representatives of American companies visited Dr. Cesare Maltoni in Bologna in January 1973. Maltoni told them that preliminary results had found cancer in some test rats, but he was unable to reach firm conclusions at that time.

U.S. government scientists knew of Maltoni's preliminary results early in 1973 but con-

sidered them to be as preliminary as did U.S. industry. Umberto Saffioti, associate director of carcinogenesis at the U.S. National Cancer Institute, attended a symposium at Bologna, Italy, April 9th to 12th, at which Dr. Maltoni showed a table giving preliminary results linking vinyl chloride with cancer in rats.

On July 17th, one European and four U.S. industry representatives presented NIOSH information that malignant tumors had been found in animals exposed to vinyl chloride. At that time no human cancer cases had been reported. Maltoni's studies had not been completed and he had not issued a full report.

ITEM: The story reports that Dr. Peter Infante, then of the Ohio Department of Health, had found that three northern Ohio communities with polyvinyl chloride plants had higher than average birth defects (page 45, col. 2).

FACT: Dr. Infante, in his report to the New York Academy of Science, stated that there is not sufficient evidence to link vinyl chloride to birth defects.

The Center for Disease Control of the U.S. Public Health Service reported on July 19th, 1975, that the study "could not establish any relationship between cases [birth defects] and vinyl chloride exposure."

ITEM: The [Cont. on 8]

LETTERS

(Cont. from 6) story quotes worker, "Harry," who charges that a supervisor had "pulled the plug" on a Goodrich plan monitoring system, so that work could continue during period of higher exposure. The story correctly states that the company denied these charges (page 46, col. 3).

FACT: Goodrich PVC plant have two monitoring systems—a computerized area monitoring system and personal monitoring systems. OSHA requires that all records must be kept and made available to both federal inspectors and employees. A recent check of these records shows no gap.

ITEM: The story quotes "other workers" as saying that when government inspection visited our Ohio PVC plant, the company shut down most of the vinyl chloride lines, claiming that maintenance work was being done on them (page 46 col. 3).

FACT: Under the OSHA inspection system, inspectors visit plants without prior notice, and therefore could arrive when maintenance operations are occurring. Since it takes some time to shut down and restart PVC reactions, this rumor is not only untrue, it just doesn't make sense.

ITEM: ROLLING STONE quotes the *Wall Street Journal*, which reported that nine PVC workers at the Shawinigan plant of BFG Canada had died from angiosarcoma, "but the company had chosen not to make an official announcement" (page 47, col. 3).

FACT: The *Wall Street Journal* story, which itself resulted from a company announcement, states: "Goodrich Canada announced in a news release last December that four cases of liver angiosarcoma had been uncovered from death records of former Shawinigan workers... The U.S. parent company said in its annual report last spring that the Shawinigan angiosarcoma toll had climbed to eight deaths."

Only one of these men ever worked at the Shawinigan plant after it was purchased by Goodrich Canada. None of the rest were Goodrich workers although the article said they were.

The *Wall Street Journal* also reported, correctly, that we had reported all these cases to the U.S. National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health. The cases also were reported to Quebec authorities and to all PVC employees in Canada. The Shawinigan release was carried in the U.S. by the Associated

Press. Since Joe Klein, your reporter, apparently had the *Wall Street Journal* story, we cannot understand his allegation that the company "chose not to make an official announcement."

ITEM: The report states that "... hearings were called on a proposed permanent standard of 1 ppm," and goes on to say that at the public hearings, the chemical manufacturers threatened that the whole industry would be forced to shut down if the standard was implemented (page 46, col. 1).

FACT: The proposed standard called for "no detectable" level of vinyl chloride in the work atmosphere, not 1 ppm. This is important in correctly reporting the industry's objection. The proposed "no detectable" provision was ambiguous. If it had been interpreted as "no detectable" by any test method—in other words, zero—it would indeed have shut down the industry.

The article clearly implies that B.F. Goodrich conspired to suppress information relating to employees' health and then to prevent implementation of safeguards to resolve this most serious situation. This implication is unfounded.

Omitted from Klein's story are such facts as: Goodrich freely and voluntarily publicized its findings of the first angiosarcoma cases when they were discovered. The company supplied detailed information to employees, state and federal officials and the industry. Goodrich has conducted the largest research program in its history, and is spending an estimated \$42 million to prevent exposure to vinyl chloride in plants, in the environment and in products. The company has stated that it can operate within all present and expected regulations.

THOMAS B. NANTZ
Executive Vice President
The B.F. Goodrich Company

THE AUTHOR'S REPLY

The objections raised by Goodrich are minute or easily refuted. I'll answer them in order.

1. **Maltoni's cancer findings:** Every independent scientist I spoke with agreed that by the time the corporate officials visited Maltoni, he had pretty much proven that vinyl chloride gas causes cancer. The fact that the U.S. government was aware of Maltoni's tests and didn't act makes it as guilty as Goodrich and the

other plastics people. The question remains: why, if there was even a suspicion that vinyl chloride causes cancer, didn't the company move to improve conditions in its factories?

2. **Infante's birth defect findings:** In the story I said that Infante's findings were not conclusive ("There was no smoking pistol"), only because there wasn't enough data in yet. In talking to Infante, I found that he stands behind his study despite Goodrich's attempts to discredit it.

3. **The statements by "Harry" and "other workers":** The vaunted Goodrich monitoring systems do indeed exist, as I reported. The question is whether Goodrich is fiddling with the machines, lowering the counts. Goodrich claims that its data is available to government inspectors. But government inspection in this country is pretty much a farce. There are 248 government hygienists who are supposed to monitor air quality in 4.1 million workplaces. If they went about the task systematically, they would hit each workplace once every 200 years. So it comes down to a question of trust. Do you trust Goodrich, which knew for almost a decade that vinyl chloride causes

liver damage and didn't do anything about it? Or do you trust the workers, who are so docile and loyal to the company that they haven't even formed a union? There wasn't room in the story for all the things the workers told me about conditions at Avon Lake. Suffice to say, Harry was not an isolated case.

4. **The 'Wall Street Journal' story:** I concede. Goodrich is to be congratulated for announcing the deaths of nine Canadian workers.

5. **The proposed government standard:** Again, I concede. But would the plastics people have acted any differently if the proposed standard had been 1 ppm, instead of 0 ppm? At its New York press conference, Goodrich admitted that it had overreacted to the proposed standard.

Finally, the most striking thing about the letter is that Goodrich does not once mention Charlie Arthur or the shoddy way the company has treated his wife since he died. The letter is no more than another piece of evidence that the company puts its profits and public image ahead of its concern for human life.

A READER'S CONCERN

Joe Klein's chilling article on the polyvinyl chloride danger brought to mind several questions which were not answered.

- (1) Is there any danger from common household plastic articles?
- (2) What are the alternative plastics to PVC—and are they just as dangerous?
- (3) What common items are PVC and what are other plastics?
- (4) Has anyone suggested how the PVC workers' wives might have become infected?
- (5) What other possible causes are there of this rare form of liver cancer, if any?
- (6) Is vinyl chloride any longer in use as an aerosol propellant?

DICK ESTEL
Chicago, Illinois

Here's a partial list of places that can answer your questions: Health Research Group (Nader), 2000 "P" Street NW, Washington D.C. 20036; Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, Environmental Sciences Lab, 100th St. and Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10029; National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Room 532, Post Office and Courthouse Building, Cincinnati, OH 45202; Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Toxic Substances, 401 "M" Street SW, Room 711, East Tower, at Dr. Wallen, Washington D.C. 20460.

HOPEFUL SIGNS

After we published Joe Klein's "The Plastic Coffin of Charlie Arthur" *Washington Star* columnist Mary McGrory devoted a column to the story and the issues it raised. Her column is syndicated to some 60 papers. McGrory reported that the Environmental Protection Agency has scheduled public hearings on proposed standards that would lower plant emissions of vinyl chloride by more than 90%. A recent EPA task force report stated that "there is no absolute proof of adverse effects

of... vinyl chloride in the ambient air. However, for carcinogens, there may be no atmospheric concentration which poses absolutely no public health risk."

McGrory stressed the dangers to PVC workers and those who live near the plants and suggested that some witness may ask to read the article aloud during the hearings. She described the feeling among PVC workers that they would rather risk cancer in 20 years than be jobless. We checked

back with some workers at the Avon Lake plant and they confirmed that most still feel this way, despite what has happened there. But our story has raised serious questions in their minds, questions about their own health and the welfare of their families, and this may be enough to bring the United Rubber Workers Union into the plant when elections are held this spring.

Mrs. Arthur did receive benefits on a regular group life insurance policy, but only after a two-month delay compelled her and her family to apply pressure on Goodrich. She remains pessimistic about her chances of receiving benefits on her claim of accidental death on the "all-risk" policy Charlie held during his 21-year employment at Goodrich.

The *Lorain Journal*, the community paper of Avon Lake, reprinted Klein's article on January 4th, even though they had been following the story on a day-to-day basis since the announcement of Arthur's illness in March 1975. The *Journal* reported a "splendid" response.

Finally, we are intrigued by a report that when the article appeared on the bulletin board at the Avon Lake plant, management felt obliged, a worker tells us, to remove it.—Ed.

