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All This And The Godfather Too

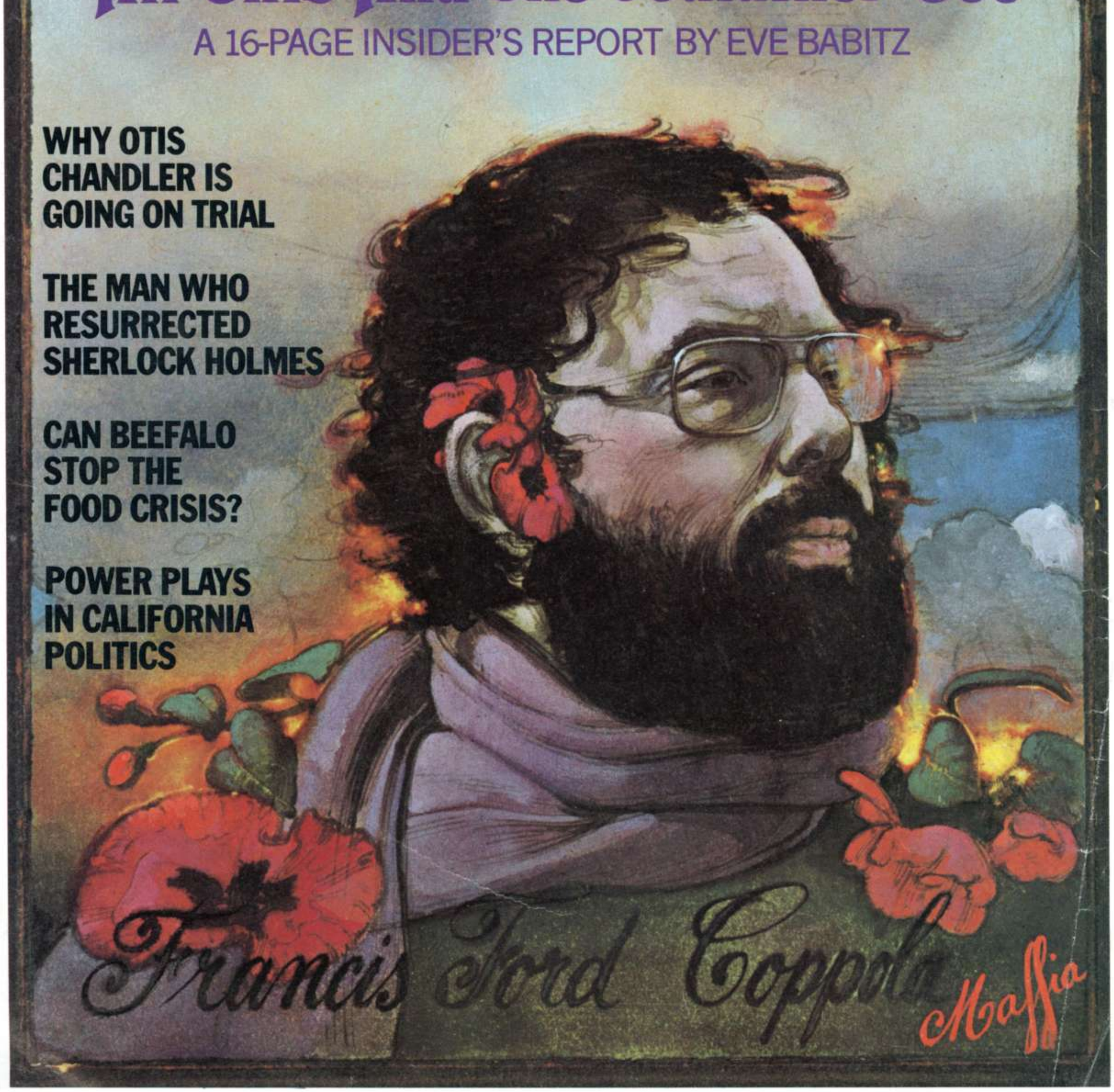
A 16-PAGE INSIDER'S REPORT BY EVE BABITZ

WHY OTIS CHANDLER IS GOING ON TRIAL

THE MAN WHO RESURRECTED SHERLOCK HOLMES

CAN BEEFALO STOP THE FOOD CRISIS?

POWER PLAYS IN CALIFORNIA POLITICS



COAST
APRIL 1975

All This And The Godfather Too

Francis Ford Coppola And His World

BY EVE BABITZ

1. The Balmy Summer Evening Dance

"They're shooting the party scene outside at night," I was told. "Bring mittens and wool socks, and wear a fur coat if you have one."

Fred Roos took over the 'phone and said, "You'll love it here. It's a chance to get away from Tana's."

I bought some socks and flew to Reno.

"Thirty degrees and that wind, coming off the lake like a mother! And them working till four in the morning! Boy, I don't know how they do it!" The cab driver who picked me up at the airport had his own thoughts about the movie. He asked, "What'll you be doing up here?"

"Watching," I said, and made him pull over so I could buy a fifth of tequila to be on the safe side because Fred Roos and other working movie people often forget to drink.

"Washing?" the guy asked, puzzled, as he drove through groves of shimmering aspens turned golden for the fall.

"No, *watching* . . . I'm sort of a writer," I replied.

The sun was setting by the time we'd driven through Reno; soon we were almost to Tahoe City, where a large and carefully assembled cast and crew were making their first attempts to shoot a movie called *The Godfather, Part II*. Al Pacino was now a star. Francis Ford Coppola had six percent of the first *Godfather*, which seemed in danger of becoming the biggest movie success the world has ever known. Fred Roos, who had once been a casting director, was now the co-producer (with Gray Frederickson).

Suddenly, the lake appeared. It was a mirror of the sky, pinkish from the sunset; reflections of pine trees rippled in the breeze.

The location was a cluster of little wooden houses, a retired motel with strange English countryside pretensions. Trees grew all around and a guard waited by the narrow road with orders not to let in *any*body who wasn't supposed to be there.

It was beginning to get chilly.

Fred Roos, from his office in one of the bigger little houses of the compound, offered to try to find me some long underwear. I was apparently about to face a frozen evening—when I could have been at Tana's, The Bar Where We All Go To Pick Each Other Up, the Italian restaurant where I once saw Al Pacino and the very place I'd caught Fred's eye across a crowded room one night a few months before and we'd been introduced. Tana's was always warm and electric.

The electricity at Lake Tahoe was provided by a loud generator that chugged away through the night, scaring animals. It provided power not only for the filming, but for the real focal point of the evening—the Mets/Oakland game.

By nightfall the first shots were being readied.

The extras were dressed in clothes suitable for a balmy summer evening; between takes they rushed into giant khaki Army coats and boots. Long underwear was stuffed under delicate gowns and there were people about whose only function was to tear the coat from a star's back the instant the cameras went on and to put the coat back on the instant the camera stopped.

"Feel this," said Francis Ford Coppola, clad in a thick bunch of clothing and wearing a ridiculous-looking woolen hat that sloped over to one side at the top. "Feel in here."

He indicated his pocket. I felt, and out came a red velvet box that looked like something that diamonds from Tiffany's might come from.

"For me!" I said. It was so soon!

"Just feel it," he said. And I did and it was hot. The gold lettering on the top, I noticed then, did not say "Tiffany." It said "Hand Warmer." Inside was a burning coal.

"People's mothers used to send those things to guys in Korea so they wouldn't freeze," Fred Roos said.

"Why, Fred, I didn't know you were in Korea," someone said. Fred Roos looks like he's about 12, but for his slightly graying sideburns.

"There were guys stationed in Korea *after* the war, you know," Fred said.

And then Francis Ford Coppola, with gargantuan patience, began to apply himself to the shooting of the film.

I don't suppose I will ever really understand Francis. My main feeling about him, which gets stronger and stronger as time goes by, is simply abject belief in his greatness. I want to be on his side.

If you read pieces about Francis, you will notice that anyone who writes about him, from *Time* and *Newsweek* to *The New Yorker* or even to *The Esoteric Film Quarterly for the Finest Minds*, all writers (except Joyce Haber), are spellbound by him.

He talks about schemes to create the greatest shows on earth, simultaneously superimposing upon them the subtlest artistic inspirations. And who, after all, is going to refuse that offer?

On Francis' side are Righteousness and Truth, Pure Untainted Visions of Ancient Glory and Modern Goodness. On the other side are the Capitalist George Grosz Money Masturbators, amassing Power in secret vaults.

You refuse this offer, you say, and you're sure Francis isn't all that great and he's just like the rest of them and besides you can't be bothered with adolescent crushes? I challenge you to talk to Francis for 15 minutes (or for four days) and find a gap.

Mistakes he makes, flaws he's got. But he's only 36 and he's still just a beginner.

2. The One-Hour Misunderstanding

Pacino and Coppola fought in Las Vegas and people quaked in their boots.

"He . . . " Pacino began. "Look, why the hell does it take so long to shoot a scene? Lumet shot *Serpico* in 18 *days*! And I go up to Francis, I've got a problem I want to talk to him about . . . So what does he *do*? He tells me *his* problems. What do I want to hear *his* problems for? He's the *director*!"

Francis is strange about actors. He believes in them. He takes a lot of trouble to cast them, and then he lets go. He doesn't try to improve them. He hardly even says "Good" after a shot that's a take; he just goes on to the next shot.

He once told me that he was terrified when he learned that Brando would actually be in the original *Godfather* movie. Imagine trying to tell someone like that how to act. Things became stranger still when Brando came up to him and said, "Now, look. I'll tell you how I like to be directed. You just tell me 'Louder, softer, madder, kindlier' . . . You just tell me. You want me to look a certain way? You tell me. You want me to look up? Down? I'll do anything you say."

"And he *did*," Coppola added with a lingering sense of amazement. "He *did* anything."

If there is anything an actor hates more than a director who won't let him alone, it's a director who trusts him to such an extent that he forgets about him entirely. The actor's art is the art of physical presence. His body, his voice, his eyes, and his inner spirit are leased to a film for the time it takes to shoot.

Of course, films are a lot more than actors. There is the camera, for example, which can express things the actor is thereby absolved from—distance, light, a certain kind of drama. There are sets, with their minute detail. There is The Studio, which wonders why everything has to cost so much and why one of the actors was seen out with a certain person who will tarnish everyone's image.

Everybody knows that Francis Ford Coppola is brilliant. And it is not just the brilliance of casting, script, or camera

Francis Ford Coppola

EVE BABITZ

"My main feeling about Francis Ford Coppola, as time goes by, is simply abject belief in his greatness."

work. It is the brilliance of stamina.

And because everyone knows how brilliant he is, the actors hold on, trusting that his trust in them is part of his brilliance. But for a person whose art is his body it's frightening to be trusted so much.

What if you're a New York actor like Al Pacino, who's used to having friends and lovers right around the corner, used to having little playhouses where he can watch colleagues working. All of a sudden, out you step onto the lot at Paramount where huge empty sound stages testify to the glory that once was Hollywood—probably the glory that made you become an actor in the first place.

You live in a hotel and they've given you a chauffeured car and out you step into the middle of an empty day. Should you read? But you can't concentrate on books. You're supposed to be thinking about your body and soul. Maybe you should go back and watch the shooting, but it's so hemmed in by the director's fastidious perfectionism that the thread gets lost and you, along with the extras, are overwhelmed by boredom.

You could go drink, but . . . And you *would* go eat except that working on a full stomach, as you know from past experience, is wrong. You decide you hate Hollywood and if you ever get out of this picture alive, you'll only do plays on the East Coast, even if they're performed in hovels, or in Maine. You'll never come back here to this damned fucking wasteland, even for brilliant fucking Francis Ford Coppola.

Or you could talk to girls. But the girls out here are different. They're not people, they don't know . . . They're too pretty. Too crazy. They don't do anything except be tall and drive fast cars. You, yourself, don't drive. You've learned from past experience that you are not to be trusted at the wheel.

You met a girl the other day who is a health-food freak. She wore no makeup or underclothes and she was gorgeous. She gave you some ginseng root and told you if you chewed on it, you'd feel better.

The camera pans away from you as you stand in the middle of the crisp, clear, empty afternoon, chewing on a distasteful, tough root, waiting to feel better. It's something to do until 3 p.m.

You are one of the chosen. Francis has chosen you and Francis is brilliant. You remember that, bear that in mind, because sometime, somehow, Francis will come forth with a dark golden thing of beauty. Just like in the movies. And everyone will say, What wonderful actors! Just like in the movies.

"Listen, babes," he growls, alternating between a glass of ginger ale and a glass of Olympia beer. "If there's anything I know, it's never try to tell anyone how much pain you're in . . . And never expect anyone to answer any question."

Or at least never expect Michael Gazzo to answer any question. Because he starts in the middle of any given topic of conversation, and it's like you've missed the first act. But he *will* tell you about the pain, very elaborately and very well. He is not unable, like most actors are, to find the words to exquisitely describe the exact quality of the pain, because Gazzo is also a dealer in words. He wrote *A Hatful of Rain*, they told me, and *he* told me that he only acts to support his writing, his three children, his dog, and his wife.

His wife watches carefully to see that he doesn't run out of beer, that his ashtray is empty; that there are matches. . . They eloped 29 years ago to Point Pleasure, New Jersey, when she was working in an insurance office and he was a machinist. It is impossible to imagine what Michael Gazzo looked like 29 years ago, he looks so himself now—so baleful. They live in a brownstone on 44th Street, which they own—a whole house in the middle of the theatre district. He has an acting workshop there and it is there that he writes. He's thinking of moving to Los Angeles, he says, because "the theatre is sociologically dead." All that's left are movies and movies treat actors like shit, he repeats, over and over. "The studios have everything ass backwards. Listen, babes, all you have is the script, the director, and the actor, and anyone else is full of shit . . . "

"I don't give a shit if Francis hears this or not," Gazzo says occasionally. "Francis is a . . . a *brilliant* man. But Francis is *not* an actor."

("Gazzo's probably going to get an Academy Award for this," they say on the sound stage, and slowly shake their heads.)

The Lost Hour occurred on Friday, November 30, 1973, at Paramount Stu-

dios on stage #27 during the Senate Investigating Committee scene.

Extras dressed in painful clothes comprised the audience, the press, and the FBI men, and, between takes, they all spoke mostly about the shoes that the women had to wear. "How can you walk in those things?" The shoes had narrow high heels and pointy toes, and were killers. I was one of the extras, hired by Fred Roos on a "waiver" to impersonate a member of the press. Waivers are for people who are not professional extras.

The professional extras are used to being bored beyond words. They are used to hardship, temperamental stars and directors, interminable waiting, and waking up at 5 a.m. The rest of us, and about one-third of the courtroom was "us," were on waivers. We weren't used to it at all.

The first day, Thursday, I had to get there at 7 a.m. and the sky was black outside at six when I heard the alarm. By eight I was wearing the ghastly clothes that they wore in 1958, had on the hideous red lipstick and the stupid black line on the top of my eyelids, and was shifting my feet. But at least I got to sit down the whole time, not lean against the back wall like some of the poor women.

Over in one corner, I saw one nondescript extra who looked like Al Pacino's brother's friend. Someone told me later that he was Robert De Niro.

It was not until 10:30 that we moved into the courtroom. Why had I had to wake up at six if they weren't going to do anything until 10:30? I tried not to think about it. I tried to be cheerful and optimistic.

My second day as an extra was Friday, and that was the day of the Lost Hour.

Michael Gazzo plays a character called Pentangeli in *The Godfather, Part II*. He is the star witness, an ex-mobster turning state's evidence. He's going to tell all about the Corleone family and hopefully send Michael (Al Pacino) to jail.

But most of the extras didn't know this. We were just told to act excited when the man was shown into the courtroom.

The cameras rolled. Suddenly, a presence entered—a flamboyant, smiling, huge presence. Gazzo was led to his seat and he ran through the scene with so much fire that even the girls pinched into their shoes against the back wall, 60 feet away, took notice. It was like an injection of pure show business.

Then he ran through the scene again. It was a complicated dance, hard to block, with photographers flashing,

"Michael Gazzo entered the room, a flamboyant, huge presence—an injection of pure show business."

Gazzo smiling, cigars lit, questions asked . . .

Then we broke for lunch, and the extras grumbled because we only got 45 minutes, which meant that we couldn't dash out to Nickodell's for anything decent, but had to eat off the truck—cottage cheese and V-8 juice and dumb sandwiches.

I had seen the rushes of one of Gazzo's earlier scenes, a dinner party that had to be relit and shot from six different angles so that the reactions of each of the diners could be recorded. Throughout the shooting, Gazzo was drinking wine. Finally, in the last take, Diane Keaton (who was playing Pacino's wife) looked into the camera and said, "I hope everyone's having a good time. I know I certainly am." Gazzo's chin was nearly on the table.

So when lunch came, I had it in the back of my mind that even though they weren't letting the extras get anything decent to eat, they would, in the interest of the scene, watch Gazzo closely. If he could get drunk in front of the cameras, just think what he could do alone in 45 minutes.

When we regrouped, all was well. Everyone found his place and we waited for the scene to begin. Gazzo, this time, was equally a presence. But he slurred his words, and there were these . . . pauses.

Francis called to his henchman, Newt. (Newt has a black eyepatch and an invisible whip, and he told us to be quiet 127 times in my two days as an extra.) "All right," he said to him. "Have everyone break for an hour."

And that was the Lost Hour.

The professional extras regarded this as a splendid opportunity to get on with their needlepoint and to worry about whether they'd be back on Monday.

Everyone, somehow, knew that it was because of Gazzo.

But how, I wondered, do you fix these things in one hour? How do they do that in the movie business? They send for an ambulance, a nurse with an alligator bag, and plenty of oxygen, food, and Coca-Cola. That's how. He was all better in an hour and they shot from there until 9:30 p.m. But he wasn't the same as when he'd first come in: He was fine, but he wasn't the same.

And now I had come to see Michael Gazzo in his rented apartment in the middle of downtown Hollywood.

The apartment was barren of personal effects. Gazzo rented it when he discovered that he couldn't abide the Holiday Inn. A couple of blocks away, three days before, an 18-year-old kid had shot a policeman in the head and a dragnet had been thrown out over the area so thick that Gazzo couldn't even get out to go to Paramount and pick up his check. The kid had been captured the next night after holing up in a motel for four hours. He finally gave up saying, "I didn't do it."

"*I* didn't do it," Gazzo said, about the Lost Hour. "It was their fault. You see the whole thing was their fault, babes, and I'm gonna tell you why."

The story, which started somewhere in the middle, of course, came out like this: The dressing room didn't have a bathroom.

The chauffeur was late and didn't know what stage they were on. The dressing room had to be shared with two other guys who were supposed to be FBI agents. There was *no* men's toilet on the sound stage. The man who was supposed to play Gazzo's long-lost brother wasn't introduced to him until ten minutes before they started, and then, it turned out, the guy spoke no English at all. And last but not least, nobody told him where to go for lunch.

"So I went out the front gate to this bar where it was dark and had four scotch and sodas. And, babes, I don't get drunk on no scotch and soda. It was just that since I was working, I hadn't eaten all day. Who can work on a full stomach? And I don't care if you play this tape for Francis. *I* was the reason for the scene! It was Pentangeli's testimony that was the reason those 400 people were all standing around. And the driver didn't even know where the fuck the stage was!

"A lot of people forget that actors are people," Gazzo said, "and they aren't paying us to be people. They're paying us to get it up 20 times a day. They pay us a lot to get it up 20 times a day. And probably there are some guys who can do *that* too, but this is . . . Listen, babes, Francis comes over to me and says 'Look scared' and I'm thinking to myself, I'm not afraid of anything. The only thing that scares me is insanity. So in two minutes I transform all the senators, all the audience, my lawyer, the

FBI guys, everyone, into lunatics. That's my craft. I'm prepared. That's what they're paying me for. But my God, they should have shown me my brother earlier, 'cause I never even saw the guy . . . ''

Then he changes without a missed step. ''Whoever's casting that thing is brilliant! Did you see that guy? My brother? Jesus Christ! What a brilliant piece of casting!''

And so goes the movie. It's all like that. They hired the most qualified people on earth and when Francis could control the environment the way he did at Lake Tahoe, where the actors were isolated in a village which was the set in which they acted, things held together. Everyone knew where dinner was. Gazzo ran an actors' workshop in the afternoons so that the actors felt like people and that acting was a dignified profession, an art.

But once things came to Hollywood, they fell apart for the mostly-New York actors. In Hollywood, actors are left to their own devices.

The huge old sound stages, the detailed sets, *everything* had to stop for one $10,000 hour because nobody thought to show Michael Gazzo where the commissary was, or to tell him how good he is.

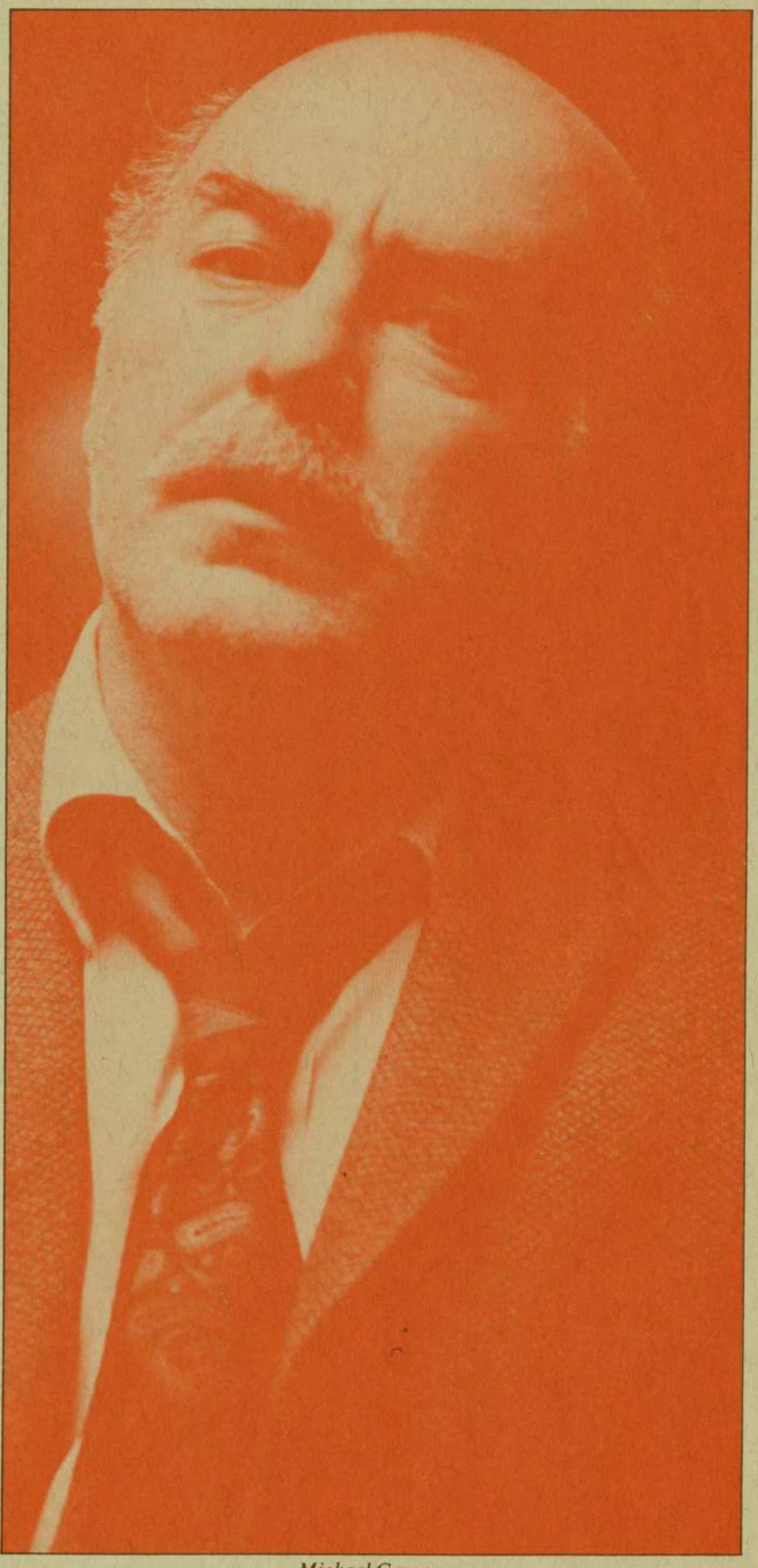
And when your own body is what the finished product of your art is, there really ought to be a bathroom nearby. And two double scotches seems like a good idea, babes, it really fucking does.

And I don't care if Francis sees this or not.

3. The Conversation

Francis Ford Coppola, 100 years ago, would have been writing grandiose operas about impossible topics (like bullfighters and cigar-rolling girls) because Coppola finds stories where everyone else is blind.

So Francis decided on a terrific idea about this guy who is the best eavesdropper in the country, is a Catholic, and likes to play the sax, alone, in his apartment. And this guy, see, does an ultra-impossible job recording an impossible conversation between a young woman and a young man in Union Square in San Francisco. Cindy Williams plays the girl and except for about three seconds at the end of the movie, the few minutes of conversation she has with the young man is the only footage



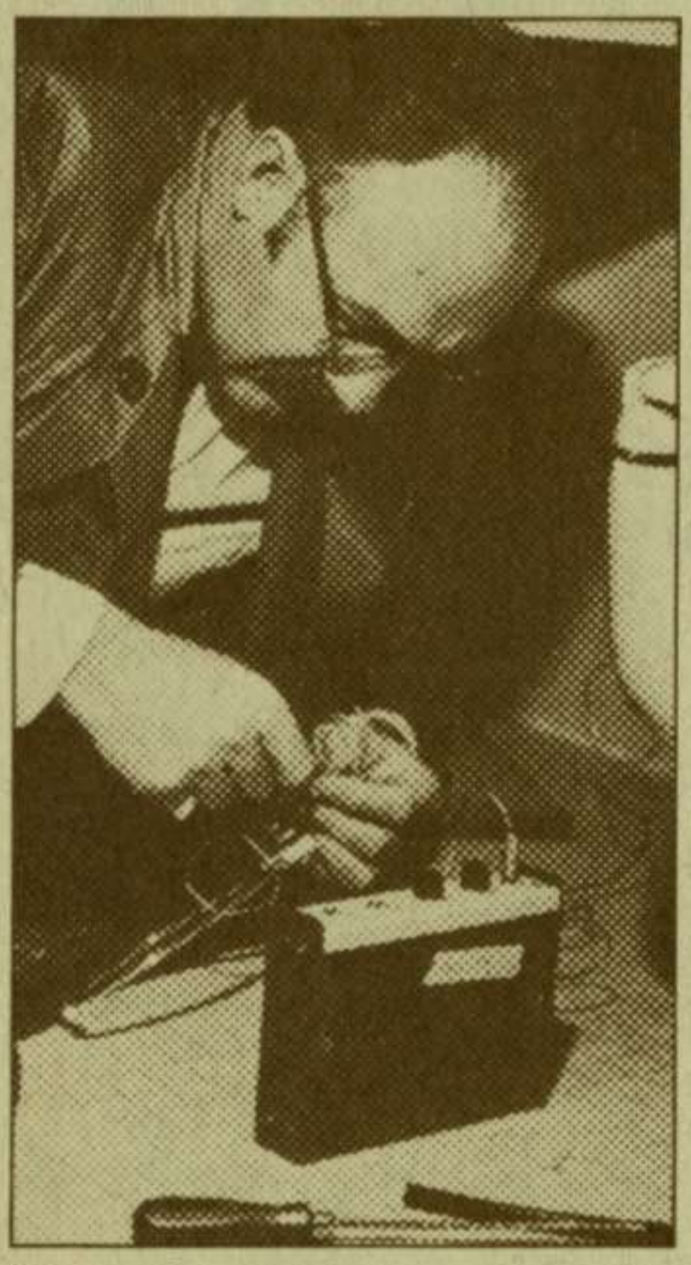
Michael Gazzo

of her. But that's OK because it is repeated over and over, the same words, the same groan, "God," when she sees a wino, collapsed on a park bench, the same mundane remark about "He must have had a mother . . . "

Her voice fades and grows louder, a repeated coda, as various meanings become possible and the conscience of her unlapsed Catholic recorder slowly turns on him like Chinese water torture each time she groans " . . . God."

The film is called *The Conversation*, and in it, San Francisco, for once in its life, is presented as it must seem to conventioneers. There's not one single little glimpse of Victoriana anywhere and the bridges are overlooked completely, as are nice shots of the bay, the hilltops. . . The Jack Tar Hotel, however, will never be the same—no matter how terrible it is when you're actually there, what Francis turned it into is worse.

There's a convention for buggers at the hotel—booths displaying new kinds of secret recording tricks ornamented with ladies past the age when they could make more money with their looks doing something else. Here, Mr. Caul, Gene Hackman, is obviously the hero. Once, it turns out, he recorded a conversation between the president of a Teamsters local and his chief associate which took place in the middle of the ocean on a boat 20 miles from anywhere else. That Mr. Caul's recording seemed to have resulted in the death of the chief associate, his wife, and his child has



"The Conversation presents San Francisco, for once in its life, as it must appear to conventioneers."

churned up an inner conflict between the American Way of "Just Doing My Job" and what Caul Catholically knows to be a sin, murder. But it's almost impossible to think of sin or murder at the convention, where everyone thinks you're the craftiest mother alive in the world today.

Francis blithely presumed that this was a terrific idea for a movie. But they only finally let him try out his idea after *The Godfather* turned out the way it did.

4. The Godfather, Part Five

They were in Reno first, then Las Vegas, then Hollywood; then it was "Do you wanna go to Santo Domingo?" (I heard that they had to keep the stars locked in safes at night so they wouldn't be stolen as hostages and that the natives were unfriendly and that one 22-year-old female crew member who'd been remarkably pure of heart when shooting began was now, under the influence of Santo Domingo, drinking with the grips, that Al Pacino was sick there, that people were coming down with a local bug which only a doctor examining one's stools could detect . . .) Well, no, I didn't want to go to Santo Domingo. But then they said, "You wanna go to New York and go to the *Gatsby* party?" Santo Domingo—no, *Gatsby*—sí!

New York was Part Five.

It was about a week before the end of March. My mother had been in New York two weeks before and described it as "balmy"—a description which I bore in mind as I packed. As it turned out, it was my mother who was balmy; New York was troublesome and horrendous, as crazy as it was overwhelming, and as *cold* as it had been eight years ago when I had left vowing never to return unless I had a suite at the Plaza and my own personal limousine.

My relationship with Fred Roos, struck up in the usual way that any of Fred's alliances for progress are struck up, was decided when he realized that he could stand me and thought I'd come in handy and, besides, I went to Hollywood High. The Hollywood High Mafia. He's the one who showed me a photograph of the time Hollywood beat Hamilton High at baseball. "It's been all downhill since then," he explained.

It's difficult to make Fred Roos laugh, but once you're on his "A" list, you're allowed to once, sometimes twice, a day. We are also allowed to make him furious—cold empty long pauses on the telephone. His "A" list, besides me, includes Cindy Williams, Harry Dean Stanton, Monte Hellman, a guy named Brooks he was in Korea with, and the newest member—whom Cindy and I insisted on for two hours one night at Tana's—Ed Begley, Jr. Jack Nicholson, too, is one, and so is Marianna Hill. I'm the only one besides this guy named Lloyd (Fred's truest friend, the one who goes to basketball games with him), who is not really in the movie business. And his mother.

"When are you coming to New York?" he asked. Like Grand Guy Grand, Fred likes nothing better than to make it "hot" for people. So it's 12 midnight and he's calling to find out when I am coming to New York and if I get a taxi in 20 minutes, I can be there by dawn and we can have breakfast. "They're shooting the 1918 street-scenes," he added. "Robert De Niro is in it and your friend Bruce Kirby. And Francis wants to talk to you about that magazine . . . And we're all going to the *Gatsby* party, lots of good eats."

"Party?" I said. "A party?"

"Yeah, we're all going. After the *Gatsby* première."

"Are we going to the première?"

"No. A private screening."

"What if I come tomorrow?"

"Just say what time," he said, "and things'll get rolling."

My book had just come out a week before and a friend of mine had written a review of it in the *Los Angeles Times* that was so violently opposed to me in general and to my book in particular that I'd run immediately to the Las Palmas newsstand to get a Tucson paper to look for a job as a waitress.

Suddenly, cooling it in New York seemed like a sensible thing to do.

I hate planes.
I hate airports.
I hate packing.
I never know what to pack.
I hate being afraid.
I am always afraid when I travel.
"How do I get from the airport to

GARY LUND

you?'' I asked.

''I'll send a limo for you.''

Well, that did it. I started thinking about going to the laundromat and how long it would take to touch up my roots.

''Where'll I stay?'' I asked finally. (He was staying at the Sherry-Netherland.)

''Here,'' he said.

How was I to know that when Fred said ''here'' he meant New York? He'd booked me into a place on Times Square called the Edison. I'd never heard of it but after I was all packed and humming the next day, I made one final call to my best agent in Hollywood, who was delighted to hear I was going to have such fun, delighted about the party, delighted about everything up until the very moment when I said the word ''Edison,'' and then she stated simply: ''Don't go.'' ''What?'' ''Don't go. I refuse to let you stay at the Edison. It's unsafe. Call them back right this minute and say you won't go.''

''I just got an ugly message from you,'' Fred Roos said after I had tried to call him back.

''Fred, you're sticking me into the middle of Hell's Kitchen.''

''Ed Begley is right down the hall from you. And your friend Bruce Kirby. All your friends are there. I thought you'd have fun.''

''. . . Oh . . .'' I said.

''You've hurt my feelings.'' He doesn't mince words. For a producer.

''I'm sorry. I'll see you tomorrow for breakfast. And if I can't stand the Edison—there's this other place I think I can stay.''

''Why do you always do this?'' he persisted. ''Why are you so obnoxious?''

''Because it's the only way you'll listen to me,'' I admitted. ''I'm jealous.''

''What's 'jealous' got to do with this?''

''I don't know,'' I said.

Another cold pause. ''Well . . . Okay . . . see you tomorrow. The guy'll pick you up at the airport and take you here.''

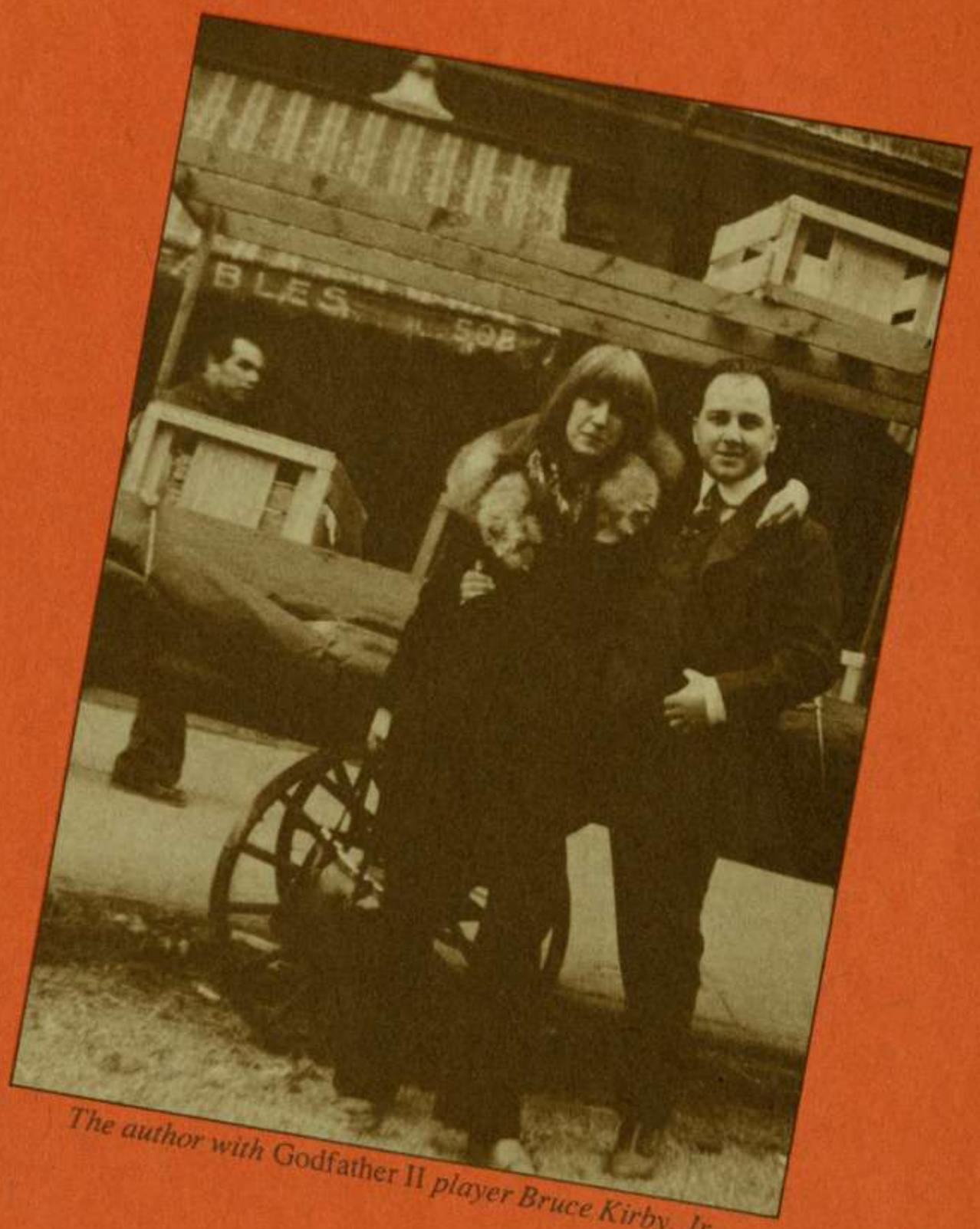
Meanwhile, my girl friend, upon learning that I was going to New York, called an old friend of hers who had a penthouse with a guest room and a private entrance, private keys. A penthouse in the upper 50's on the East Side. The only safe place in New York. The penthouse friend didn't like women as anything more than friends, she explained, but he was a peach and I'd love him. (''You'll love him,'' they always say. ''When you get to New York give him a call.'' And you never do, do you? Because you know you'll hate him and besides there isn't time.) Members of the Gay Community have never liked me much the way they like my girl friend, who's ''got great bones and ages well,'' and it was only the sheerest and most utter desperation which would finally throw me into the penthouse of someone who was to become one of my most cherished friends.

The Red-Eye Special was hellish. I felt murderous rage at those who slept through it. We landed at 6:30 a.m.

My chauffeur looked like Al Pacino, only he was Jewish. He was an ex-cop wounded in the line of duty in Bedford-Stuyvesant; he knew supercops ''Batman and Robin.'' All the women in Los Angeles are in love with dark, fast talking New Yorkers, and my chauffeur was a dear. (All the women in New York have posters of Redford on their walls. If they came to Los Angeles, they'd find Redford parking their cars and saving their lives on the beaches of Santa Monica. Redfords are a dime a dozen in LA. Pacinos are *de rigueur* in New York.)

''Don't take your purse with you when you go outside the Edison,'' my ex-cop chauffeur advised me when he dropped me off at the Sherry-Netherland.

Fred was wearing pajamas and the same bathrobe he wears to pad around reading scripts in in LA. Darling, darling Fred, all sleepy and darling Hollywood High.



The author with Godfather II *player Bruce Kirby, Jr.*

"Two more hours," he said, and went back to bed. He keeps his room so hot it's embryonic, and I paced, took a bath, washed my hair, and wondered about the Edison.

At nine we went down to breakfast. He made three 'phone calls first. He always makes three 'phone calls right after he says, "We're going right now."

After breakfast, the chauffeur dropped Fred off at the Gulf and Western Building and then took me to the Edison. I wondered if I could stand the Edison. All the men in the elevator looked as though they were just waiting to open their overcoats and reveal the worst.

The bellboy opened the door to my room, looked in, and said, "Oh, good, the bed's made up." I gave him a dollar and sat down. I asked for Ed Begley on the 'phone and the operator said she'd never heard of him. I couldn't remember Bruce Kirby's last name.

I called Jay Rank, the penthouse friend-of-a-friend. I called him at work where he supervised a Seventh Avenue high-style clothing manufacturing house with 400 people working under him.

"I was expecting you at 7:30," he said. "Just go to my apartment, tell the elevator man, Scott, who you are and he'll take you to my apartment."

"What about the key?"

"Don't worry about the key," he said. "The door's open."

"You just leave the door open in New York?"

"In my building it's all right. It's owned by the Mafia."

(They are not allowed to say the word "Mafia" in *The Godfather* because the Mafia doesn't exist except in buildings where you don't need to lock your doors in New York.)

By 12 o'clock I was opening the door of Jay Rank's penthouse.

Safe.

Huge ceilings, large white couches and chairs, space, a terrace, clean.

Three cats looked at me; one ran, one didn't bother, and one, a Persian princess, came on purring. Ohhhhhh . . . home.

Thank God for the Mafia. Because of them I was safe and because of them Francis Ford Coppola was making another gigantic work of art.

"Gris, gris, gra, ca-ca pistasche," I sighed, my Cajun great-grandmother's voodoo chant for safety. And I put in a good word for the Mafia, the New York one and the Hollywood High one.

My bedroom at Jay's was a shambles; boxes of photographs were stacked up

"The Great Gatsby was boring pudding—$6.8 million, brought-in-right-on-schedule, boring pudding."

three feet high on top of the bed. But it was a safe bed and I got the boxes off. The Persian came in to see how I was doing and when I put a beautiful patchwork quilt over the bed, she jumped on it to see how she'd look. Divine as usual.

The Persian came to the door looking worried. Jay Rank was still not home and it was almost six o'clock. I wished Jay Rank would get home so I could find out who he was. He had no rock-and-roll records, just Broadway shows and European singers. I knew that much. He had lots of flowers.

For a man who'd been up since 7:30 working in a giant factory designing clothes all day, Jay Rank looked hysterically immaculate and kind when he arrived.

"What would you like to drink?" he asked, removing his gloves and hat.

"My God," I said. "How can you look like this? You're so neat, you're perfect, and I'm . . . I'm just from LA."

"Scotch?"

I followed him into the kitchen, where he filled up a silver ice bucket and I followed him back into the living room, where he filled two gorgeous Swedish glasses full of ice, scotch, and soda. He smoked fine Shermans and had a Dunhill black lighter with gold trim.

From the time he came home, at about 6:30, until 1 a.m., we drank dinner and talked. He did not loosen his tie. He remained perfect and only I got drunk.

The plan was to meet on the 29th floor of the Gulf and Western Building, see *The Great Gatsby*, for which Francis had written the script, and try not to die. Then we were to get into the limousine, go to the Sherry-Netherland to change, and go to The Party at the Waldorf Astoria for "eats." The party was supposed to be "black tie" so Fred had ordered up a tuxedo from wardrobe. Francis was so disgusted by the movie that he refused to change out of his corduroy.

Gatsby was boring pudding—$6.8 million, brought-in-right-on-schedule, boring pudding. But no use crying over spilt pudding. And besides, *The Conversation* was coming in for the home stretch, ten lengths ahead of everything else, smelling like a rose.

Everyone had forgotten about the roses.

Everyone had forgotten what they liked.

Except Francis.

"It's a perseverance of vision," he mentioned *en passant* one afternoon to a reporter. "That's all."

Francis perseveres. He remembers what we like.

And we like movies. We like movies with plots, with people we care about, with scarey parts, with mystery . . . We like to go to the movies, sit down and let someone take over the controls. And all the promotional campaigns in the world cannot make pudding into roses. *Gatsby* is the proof of that.

The party was just great.

They gave you enough caviar. The waiters wore white gloves. The plates from which we supped hadn't been brought out since Queen Elizabeth had been there in 1966. They gave us pheasant and something so good that none of us could figure out what it was. It was halfway between asparagus and potatoes. Or maybe it was gnocchi.

Dessert was flaming! (Once someone derided me by saying, "Eve likes champagne cocktails and everything flaming. But it's true.)

Cindy Williams, the star of *American Graffiti* and *The Conversation*, my friend Cindy, sat at our table nearer to Fred than I (she's much more manageable).

After a tirade of untold brilliance in the limo about what was the matter with *Gatsby*, Francis didn't mention it again, and the caviar seemed to cheer him up. It certainly cheered *me* up.

5. The Street

They took over Sixth Street between A and B and turned it into New York, 1918.

The attention to detail was marvelous. The pushcarts, the dogs, the goats, the chickens, the horses, the ancient cars, the newspaper racks with all-1918 newspapers on them, some in Italian. . .

(On a day when I wasn't there, 700 extras had filled the recreated street dressed in immigrant clothes and the three most important items on that extra call were:

1. No tweezed eyebrows.

2. No dyed hair.
3. No nose jobs.)

Since the most difficult way to shoot the particular scene they were doing would have required a 200-foot-long dolly shot, they decided to do it that way.

Robert De Niro, playing Marlon Brando as a young man, looked less peevish than most actors who have to wait and wait and wait and wait. Debbie (Fred's assistant) and I huddled together and watched and I brought my camera so I wouldn't be too bored.

Francis strolled around throwing chocolate-covered almonds into everyone's mouth.

"It's just a crime, anyway," I said to Francis. "Just when *The Conversation* comes out, Pauline Kael has to stop writing for *The New Yorker*."

"Who is that other one, anyway?" someone asked. A New York sharpy interviewer who knew everything said, "It's that Penelope Gilliatt woman. She and Canby from the *Times* go and sit and neck during screenings."

"Really," I said. "Aren't they a little old?"

"Eve," Francis said, "Take me away from all this. Take me to some little apartment where I can write all day and dawdle around in the kitchen and when you come home from work I'd make you a nice dinner."

"Yeah, but would you wash the dishes?"

"You wanna know something?" Francis replied. "More men wash dishes in America than women. That's a fact. It's true."

I believed him. I don't know where he got that information but I believed him. So, I said, "So, I'd go work all day and you'd get to stay home and write?"

"Yeah. In fact, that was the best time of my life one time when I had a setup like that."

"So why'd you blow it?" I asked.

A production assistant poked his head in. "Newt wants to talk to you about tomorrow."

"Why?" Francis asked.

"Because if it's raining we shoot inside and if not we shoot outside."

"Good," Francis said. "Tell him 'good.' Why does he have to ask me these questions? . . . Why can't I just have a little apartment somewhere and do nothing? . . ."

The 'phone rang. Francis picked it up himself. There are no buttons on these 'phones in Francis' and Fred's offices. There is one 'phone for Fred in the Moviola room and one 'phone for Francis. There are no secretaries. When

"'Robert De Niro is stealing this picture,' Francis said, 'because his character is so well defined.'"

a 'phone rings, whoever's nearest picks it up.

". . . Yeah, this is him," Francis said over the 'phone. ". . . You just saw it, huh? . . . Well, it's a funny thing about *The Conversation*, because a lot of different people saw it and I think that each person should decide their own ending . . . In fact I rather like it when people see it a whole different way from the way I thought it was . . ."

The conversation went on, a conversation about *The Conversation*; someone who'd obviously just been to see the movie was calling up to find out what it was all about. It went on for 20 minutes. Francis wouldn't budge. He would not tell whoever it was what the movie they had just seen was about.

"Golly," Fred said when the 'phone was finally put down. "Who was that?"

"Some chick says she's from *The New Yorker* . . ." Francis replied. "Gilliato or something like that."

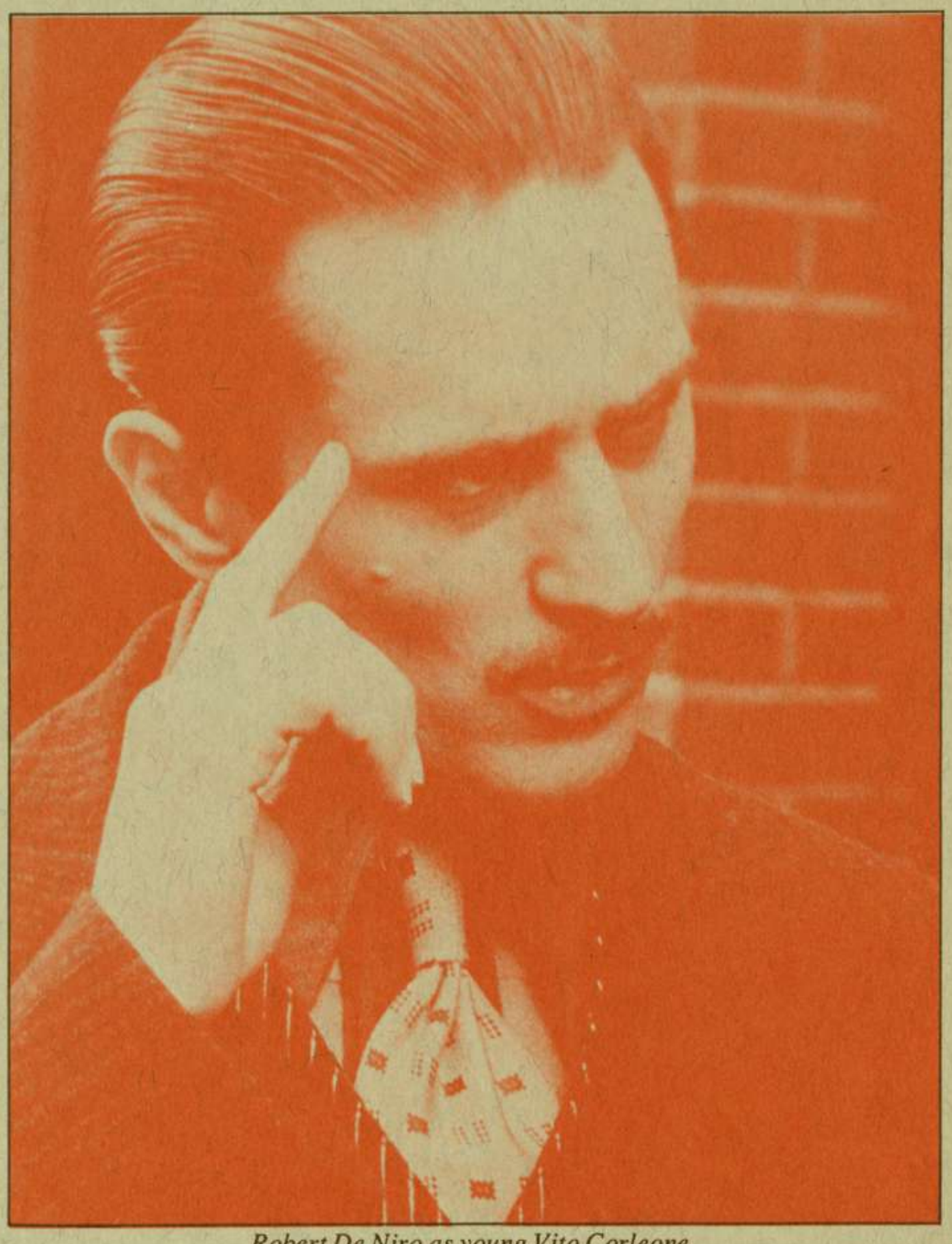
"Oh, no," the New York sharpy said. "And you mean she's calling you to . . ."

(A half hour later, I heard someone say, she 'phoned again for the shooting script. I wonder if she'll ever find out.)

Francis sat back. The 'phones had stopped ringing.

"What'd you do yesterday?" Fred asked.

"Oh, nothing," Francis replied. "I just sort of hung around in the morning and then, oh, yeah, I watched five hours



Robert De Niro as young Vito Corleone

of dailies. The whole picture that we've got so far. It was really interesting, watching it. There are just a couple of scenes that need to be reshot. And then there's the scene with the lullaby that I'm going to make a lot stronger. I thought it was too corny, you know, at first, to have Vito Corleone go straight from killing that guy in the white suit into singing a lullaby for Michael and holding him in his arms—the kids are the wrong ages on that by the way but we're going to fudge. . . . But it has to be strong because we go straight from there into Michael Corleone holding his own baby in arms, and we're going to segue that by thematic music so we give Michael some character because he's such an executive in this one you don't know who he is . . . De Niro is stealing the picture because his character is so much more defined . . .''

The street on the Lower East Side which *The Godfather, Part II* has taken over is almost completely movie-ized—almost, but not completely. Two dark little bars are still open, in which real people sit drinking real drinks. One is Ukrainian and the other is Puerto Rican and they are always open, Hollywood or not.

The locals are madly eclectic. There are the real faces, the real children of Ellis Island, the faces that you see in those Museum of Modern Art photographs from 1911. Then there are the sharp young black men, young guys with high, high platform shoes. There are the transvestites from David Bowie-land. There are the beautiful left-over hippie mothers with sons who look like daughters. There are the omnipresent limousine drivers who grow familiar and important for they are the means of escape.

All the people who were not ''principals'' or in the extra business had to scoot away into the bars or hallways whenever Newt said, ''Now anyone who's not in this scene back away, please . . .'' or ''Anyone wearing modern glasses, take them off, please . . .'' or ''Would you mind getting that dog off the dolly tracks, he's going to get killed standing there . . .''

My hair, which I had only recently bleached a kind of shocking fox color (I went to the *Godfather* Christmas party and no one paid the slightest bit of attention to anyone but blondes so I decided to go orange and finish them off once and for all), my hair and my fox collar and my green shoes and my Brownie had become notorious within an hour of my arrival and I was known as: ''Did you see that girl with the red hair and the green shoes and the Brownie?''

''Let me try that Brownie,'' Francis said, stretching for another interminable stretch of waiting. ''How do you do it?''

Everyone I let try that camera that day did better than Francis. He took a picture of me, only it was mostly sky and, well . . .

''What's the matter with you, anyway?'' I asked. ''Don't you know a *thing* about cameras?

''No, I don't,'' he said, and handed me back my Brownie.

6. Cannes

The Conversation was the last film to slip in under the wire at the Cannes Film Festival and so Francis and his entourage went, while I returned to Hollywood. I learned that Paramount was so mad that the rain had made everything take longer on *The Godfather, Part II* that they cancelled their original offer to provide room and board for some of the actors in France, but Fred Roos had already notified a bunch of people that their future in Cannes was secure (if only they got there themselves—Paramount wasn't going to pay for no flights, mind you). So Fred, I heard, had to pay for everything. It couldn't have set well with him, having to pay for actors' room and board himself. (The one time he ever took me out for a legitimate dinner in Los Angeles, where we went all by ourselves without the rest of the ''A'' list, he took me to his favorite restaurant, which turned out to be a Mexican one without dash or fervor and the bill came to $4.06.)

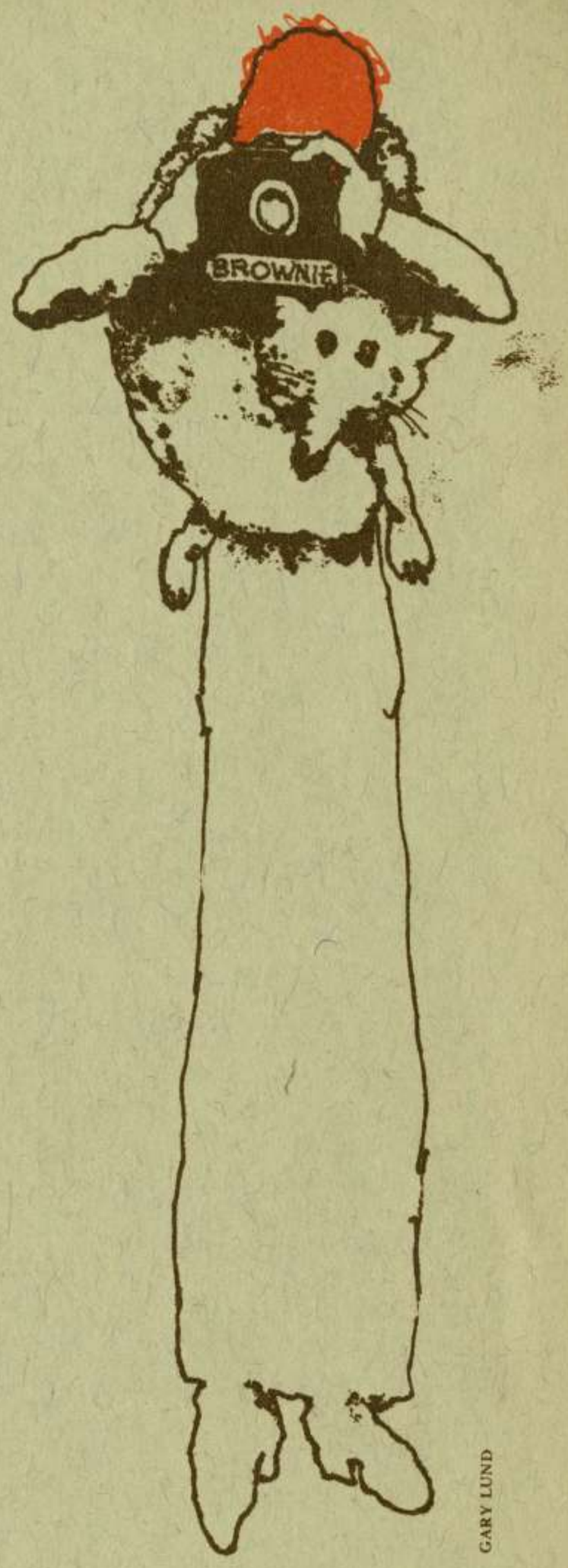
One day, I went over to the Paramount offices in Beverly Hills and mailed out Xerox copies of my chapter about the filming in New York to them all. I noticed that page 29 was missing and I realized that I'd gone from page 28 to 30 and neglected 29 altogether. It occurred to me to mention that there was no page 29, but I forgot. I was hungry and it was lunch time.

The 'phone rang one night, a few days later, and the connection was scratchy and far away. A man's voice said, ''You don't know me exactly . . . Are you Eve Babitz?''

''Yeah?'' I said suspiciously.

''Well, my name is Victor Ramos and I . . .''

''Oh, yeah,'' I said, ''you're doing something on the *Godfather* movie aren't you?''



GARY LUND

''Yes,'' he said, ''and I'm in Cannes and I don't know how to tell you this . . . But . . . Well, I was reading your New York piece and I . . .''

My immediate reaction was, This guy's calling to tell me they're suing me and that if I should so much as allow another soul to see anything I've written about Francis, they'd clap me into jail.

''What's the matter with it?'' I asked.

''Well, Fred wanted me to call you even though I don't know you because . . .''

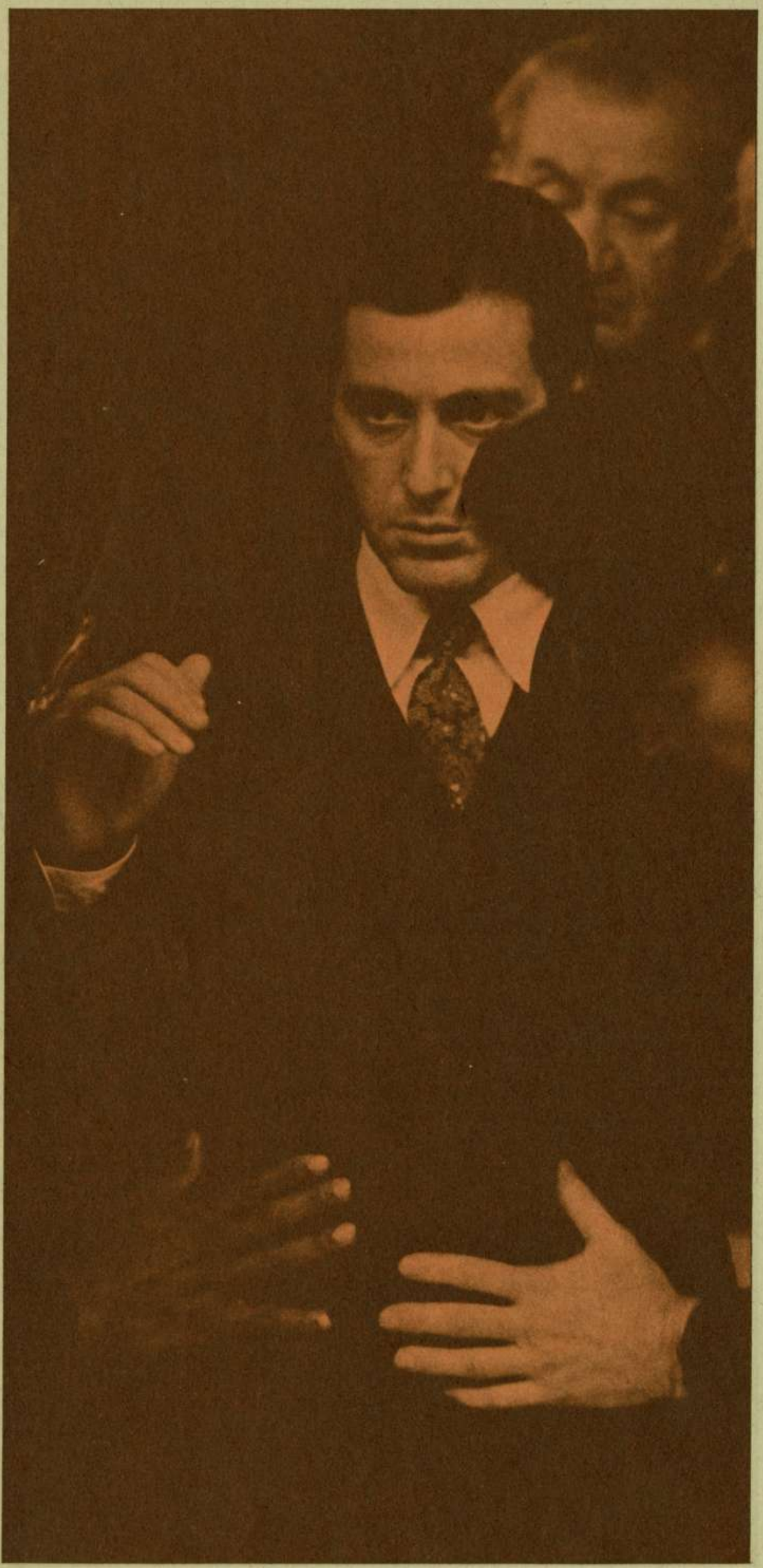
''What!? Come on. Tell me!''

''Page 29 is missing and Fred wants to kill me.''

''There is no page 29,'' I said.

''There is no page 29?''

''No . . . There isn't one. I forgot about page 29. There isn't one.''



Al Pacino as Michael Corleone

"You mean I just spent $34 to find out there *isn't* one?"

"Yeah," I said.

"Ah . . . Fred wants to talk to you. Hold on a second," Victor Ramos said. "The piece by the way is really very funny."

I had to wait for Fred Roos, as usual. I could hear his voice in the background all the way from Cannes making me wait.

"What happened to page 29?" he said when he finally came on the line.

"I forgot it. There is no page 29."

"What have you got against the number 29? You don't like that number or what?"

"When are you coming back?"

"Well, tomorrow I go to London for three days and then . . ."

"When are you coming back to LA?"

"Do you miss me?"

"Yeah, when are you coming back?"

"The first two weeks in June, sometime."

"Terrific. How is it there?"

"I'll tell you about it when I see you."

"And can I come up to San Francisco and watch you edit?"

It seemed like the pause had come in again but it was only the poor telephone line. Fred said, "Why don't you come to Cannes?"

"I've got an ulcer," I explained, "I'm sick."

"From New York?"

"Yeah, it's like one of those Evelyn Waugh things where you hear about this little boy getting shot in the foot on game day and casually throughout the book you find out he's had his leg amputated and then finally he dies . . ."

"What?"

"Nothing. I'm sick." I wanted to hang up and go back to bed. "I'll see you then in two or three weeks if it doesn't rain. And we all miss you."

"Good."

7. Anything Else Is Preferable

The shooting was finally finished. Everyone who could scattered as far away from the editing as possible.

In San Francisco, Francis has bought a building which is eight stories high, called the Columbus Tower, which used to be a nifty place to rent an office for small, exquisitely hip enterprises but is now, floor by floor, giving way to Moviolas and their more up-to-date counterparts.

In the basement, there is a tiny screening room where they had showed, the

day before I got there, the five-hour version of *The Godfather, Part II*. They had to edit it down to three-and-a-half hours, or maybe just three . . .

An atmosphere of lethargy prevailed.

It may just have been because I arrived there on a Monday and Monday is when Francis doesn't eat anything all day. It makes him anxious and bored.

(In LA a week before at a party, Francis had run into John Milius, who'd just lost 35 pounds and was gloating impossibly at his newly trim condition.)

I knew that things had slowed down to a summer-vacation pace because when I got off the plane, expecting to be picked up by some dispensable member of the crew, it was Fred Roos himself who came for me. When the producer comes and gets you at the airport, it's an empty time.

Three things were supposed to happen while I was there. I was supposed to "watch Francis edit," and I actually did see him sitting in front of a Moviola at one point. I was supposed to "talk about *City*"—*City* being a magazine Francis fell upon and took over to give himself something to worry about in his spare time. And I was supposed to convince everyone that a piece I'd written for *City* was much better than they'd thought it would be when they asked me to write for them.

Mainly, though, I was just looking forward to the old *Godfather* razzle-dazzle once again.

Usually, I dread going to San Francisco, because it's always raining there and it's always raining anywhere *The Godfather, Part II* movie is, anyway, and that seemed like fabulous odds that it would be raining when I got there. However, in Los Angeles that week the weather was humid and desperate from a Mexican storm we were experiencing by osmosis. It was 95 and wet. I'd rather it were just *wet* I decided, so I went to San Francisco gratefully.

And somehow San Francisco was bright, gorgeous, not too windy, not foggy, clear, blue, and luxuriously just right.

Of course, this would happen just when everyone had to go into dark little rooms all day and squint at footage on little flickering screens . . .

Fred Roos picked me up in his rented Mustang II and drove it like a dagger through the freeway traffic, asking me gossipy questions and telling me about the five hours of film they'd watched the day before, and I noticed the same uneasy look in his eye he'd had when he'd been worrying about *The Conversation*. They'd worked on editing *that* for

"Chaos, the eternal human madness-fear, is usually fixed in Moviolas. To the editors go the spoils."

months and months . . . And I'd read an interview with Francis where he'd confessed that the ending could have been different and that perhaps, if the movie did well in Cannes, more people would go see it.

(The movie did well in Cannes. It won. I don't know if more people went to see it, though. Fred didn't either, when I asked him.)

"What am I supposed to do," I asked. "About watching?"

"Oh, you can just watch," Fred said, trying to not sound too vague.

My friend Lynzee Klingman is an editor and I'd once watched her for 15 minutes, which was as much as I could stand. Another time, when I'd worked for a month on *Woodstock* on the same floor as the editors, it never even occurred to me to watch. It would have been too much like watching a file clerk or . . . well . . . Watching someone make Xerox copies is more exciting and adventurous than watching someone edit.

But I believe that in the middle of all things like movies and wars there comes a point, a time, when everything suddenly falls completely out of control and there is a moment, a day, when chaos is so nearby that anything else is preferable.

Chaos, the eternal human madness-fear (when you have all the power and still it doesn't work), is usually fixed in Moviolas.

To the editors go the spoils.

England lost World War II. The fact that they *won* was too obvious. No one liked it much that they won. What happened to Germany was much more interesting.

To the editors go the spoils.

Nobody likes the editing room.

It's the worst part of art.

Mozart wasn't being too funny when he said the most important, *important*, part of music was "the rest," the silence. What they cut out.

I was just waiting for a place to inject the above. It was written right after I returned from San Francisco and was trying to figure out why suddenly there was no glamour and what would I write about when there was no glamour.

My father once remarked that the reason Francis might have moved to San Francisco was because they both had the same name, but I read in an interview that Francis says he moved to San Francisco because it wasn't too far from Hollywood but wasn't *in* Hollywood. It takes about 50 minutes to fly to Los Angeles from San Francisco and Francis has his own plane so he doesn't even have to wait in line.

Walking around in North Beach with Francis I could see why he moved there and what he likes about it. There is a strange twist to his personality: that although he likes things grandiose and massive, he likes them grandiose and massive in a personal, Italian kind of way, a way in which the details of the thing stay manageable. There is something very theatrically Italianate about everything he does, a kind of quality I learned to appreciate when I lived in Rome—where even on the most medieval cobblestone street the girl who walks past you wears shoes like a Dior lady.

"I kinda like this place," Francis said painfully, because it was Monday. He looked around and the scale was right for him. I have never felt about San Francisco the way I felt when I was with Francis. I didn't feel like it was a city I'd never quite understand (the way all native Los Angelenos truly feel). I got the impression that the whole place was one big sound stage. Walking around San Francisco with Francis felt like it must feel to walk around Rome with Fellini.

About two blocks away from the Columbus Tower, Fred called out to a Chinese gentleman who was passing on the street. The Chinese gentleman waved back and went on his way across the street. "That's Francis' business manager," Fred laughed, embarking on a story which sounded like pure Francis. "He got a Chinese business manager and it really terrifies everyone. See, everyone knows that the Chinese are the best business people in the world, right? So Francis got this guy, he's had him for years, and whenever he has to have business meetings he says, 'Wait a minute, I have to fly my business manager in' and then they all just don't know what to do when this guy comes in."

Amateur theatricals, I thought to myself, even in business.

The Columbus Towers is eight stories high but each story is no bigger than three thumbs and they are all narrow and triangular-shaped and awkward, but on the top is a cupola, in blue. (Was my father right about why Francis moved to

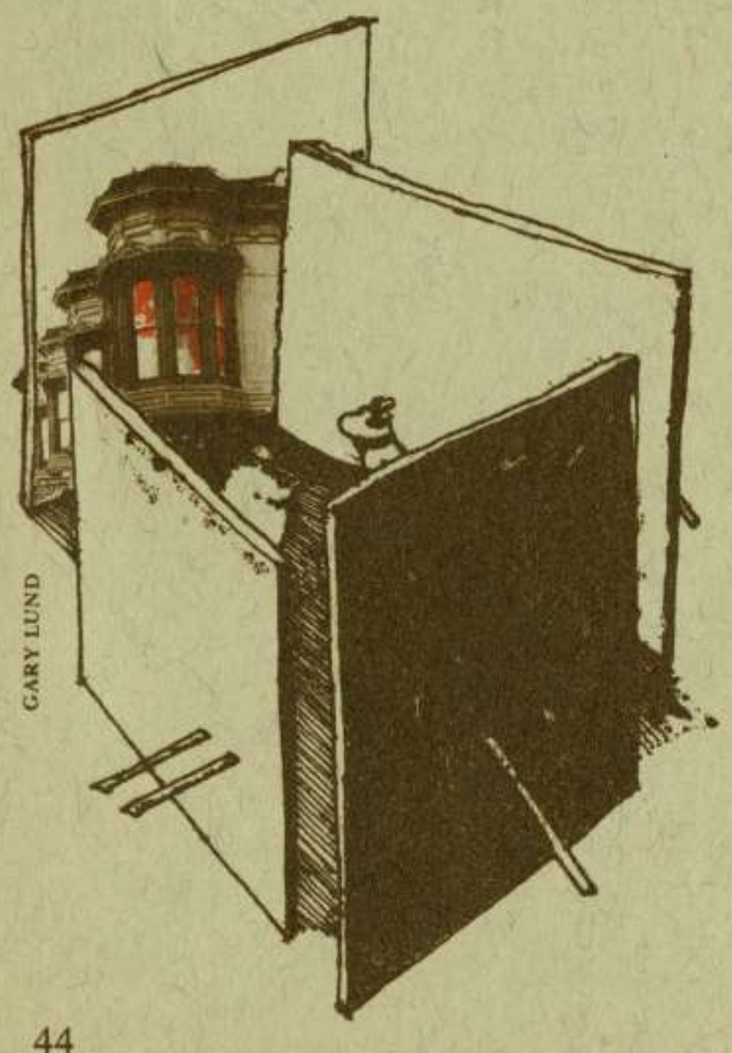
San Francisco?) When I was in the building years ago, the music business and other chic pastimes had all painted each office whatever color they thought best but now Francis had had all the paint taken off all the woodwork and all the walls painted white and the place, with its caramel-colored wood and white walls, looked like an old Breck Girl ad, pure and simple and daintily sensual. All the windows had pine wood Venetian blinds on them and at sunset a color that I had thought only came from Siena shot through the rooms casting such a romantic glow that one could hardly talk.

The elevator was slow and ordinary and had room for about four people. It stopped sometimes at every floor just for the hell of it.

Fred and I dropped by the seventh floor where Francis has his office; it's totally monkish except for the color of the caramel wood and the pinkish hues cast in through the venetian blinds. (Francis is a fool for Bertolucci and has his very own print of *The Conformist*, in which the venetian blinds played a big rôle.) Francis was not there but "would be back," so Fred and I went to eat lunch.

When we came back, we found Francis in front of an editing machine with his hands folded across his stomach looking out the window.

They were rerunning the five-hour cut in the basement and Fred suggested that I should be allowed to go down and watch but Francis didn't think "anyone should see it until it's done," then changed his mind and decided I could go watch until he was "finished" and could come take me over to *City* magazine.



GARY LUND

"Walking around San Francisco with Francis felt like it must feel to walk around Rome with Fellini."

The room in the basement was so small that it was hard not to trip over things, but I finally sat down and saw the "Havana" scene (shot in Santo Domingo), but I couldn't help thinking things like "I wonder how they got all those extras to jump around like that?" and "God, Al Pacino looks tired." Meanwhile, a man in back of me, named Walter, kept telling someone in the projection booth that this or that section should be relooped. The feeling of glamour just wasn't in the air.

The only thing I noticed about the film, in fact, was that the color was gorgeous and the sets were heavenly.

A man I know who wants to be a producer is always quoting someone who said, "The worst dailies make the best movies." But these weren't the dailies. These were part of a five-hour monster that had to be edited down to three hours, and I couldn't help wondering how they were ever going to do it.

Francis came in at last and offered to take me over to the magazine office.

Magazines are the most superior pastime of civilized man, I've always thought, and Francis, it seems, is not immune to such feelings himself. There is something about starting a magazine which is even better than setting out to discover America. All my life I've been starting magazines or been the sidekick of people who've just started them. There is no creative endeavor more fun than magazines.

Francis came to buy *City* because he liked the idea of a "service magazine" which told you what you could do and see in a particular city. The first time he showed it to me was up in Reno when they'd just begun shooting the movie. We were standing in his living room and he tossed the magazine across the room onto the couch and said, dramatically, "What's the matter with this magazine?"

I picked it up. It felt awful. It was printed on newsprint and the cover was hideous. Inside were more articles about the Jefferson Airplane than anyone could bear to think about.

"The matter with this magazine," I said, "is the art work and the writing."

That was in October of 1973, and now it was July of 1974, and those two things were *still* what were the matter with the magazine, although the art work on the cover had improved and the quality of the paper was less untouchable. Francis had been interviewing potential editors and had found one guy who he'd thought for sure would be good because he'd worked for years at *Newsweek*, *Rolling Stone*, and other publications of that ilk. I did not envy the editor who had to try to turn *City* into something other than what it was. It wasn't like starting your own magazine. It was like trying to save the Titanic.

The building which houses *City* is three stories high and Francis bought it. It's only a block away from the Columbus Towers and it's right next door to a little theatre with a hugely baroque lobby and a small seating capacity, which Francis also bought.

"We went to the Chinese tea cake restaurant for lunch," I told Francis, as we were on our way back passing the coffee shop which is the bottom floor of the Columbus Towers. "Why don't you buy *it*?"

"I don't just buy everything," Francis said. "I just buy what I need. Like this coffee shop ought to be a cute little restaurant that sells cappuccino. But they own the lease."

"You're thinking of starting a restaurant too?" I thought. My second favorite thing to do is to start restaurants.

On the second day, Fred took me to lunch with Walter Murch, who had worked on the editing of *The Conversation* with Francis and was now doing *The Godfather, Part II*. "He's not just an editor," Francis told me, "He's working on this *with* me."

I'd just seen a piece of film of what I knew to be the end of the movie, since I'd read the script. I saw it in a room that had light coming into it on a screen as big as a TV screen and it wasn't what I had expected at all. It seemed slower than the way I remembered thinking it would have been from the script and it seemed disjointed and flawed by unnecessary people.

"How'd you like the alternate ending?" Walter said.

"Alternate!?" I said, "I thought that *was* the ending."

"No, we changed the ending . . . That's the alternate ending."

"Well, what's the new ending like?" I asked.

He told me that it was very smart, a solution to one of the major problems they were having with the movie

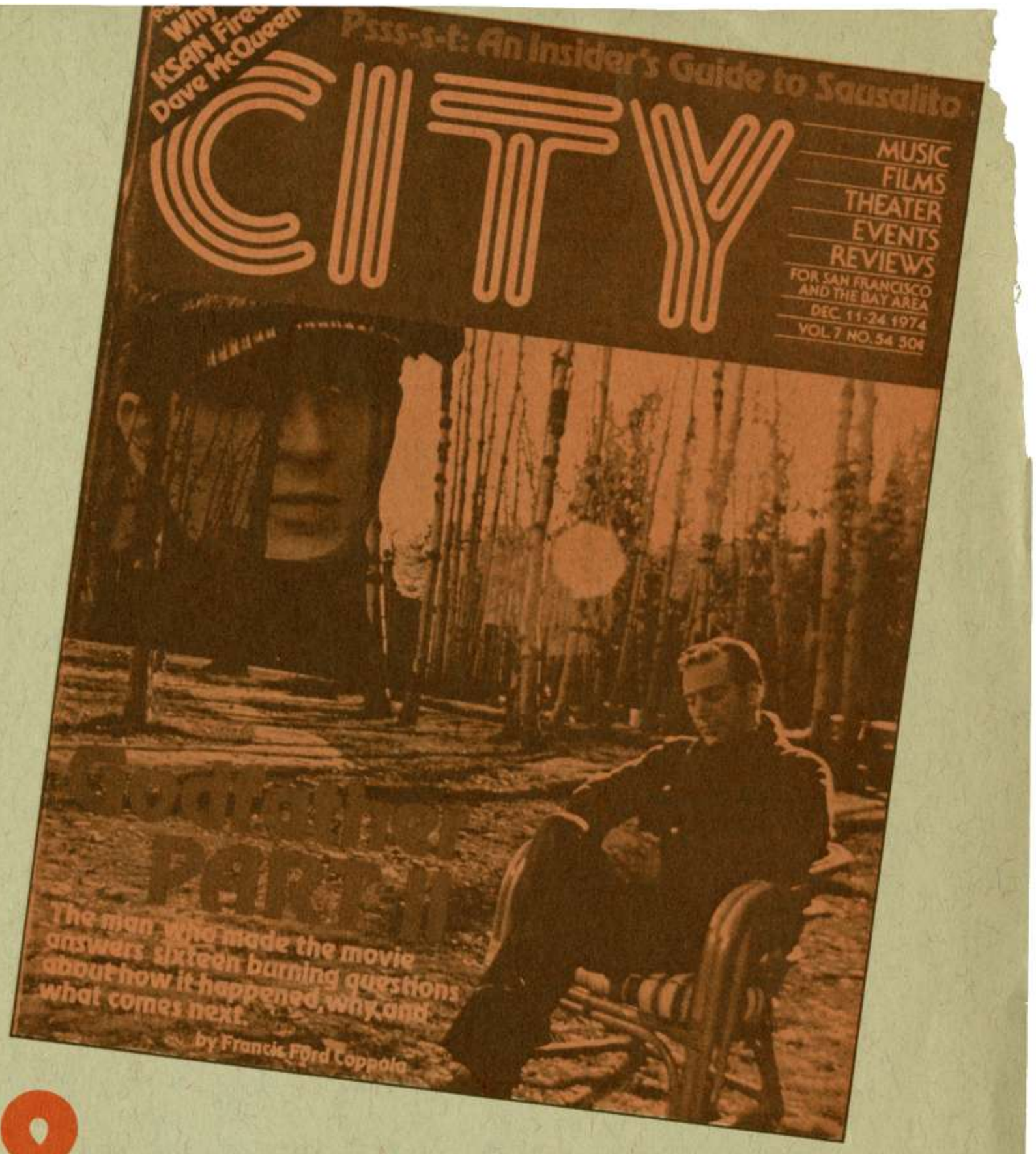
which is one of those way-back-there art questions about motivation. "It's the same problem," Walter Murch said, "that we had with *The Conversation*. Remember?"

Walter explained that in the first *Godfather* movie the problems hadn't been the same, since when Al Pacino is first seen he's entirely different from how he comes to be and yet we all remember what he was like at the beginning. "It's like he's this guy who is told that he has to swim under water 20 miles to an island," Walter went on, "and we see him before he goes under and then how he is submerged . . . But in this one, he's still swimming under water and we never know who he is, we forget, and it even seems that he never was anything else. We can't tell if he's telling the truth because he's been lying so long, he's turned so completely into another person, we never know who he is. . . So maybe with this new ending. . . If we. . ."

The thing about movies like *The Godfather, Part II* is that they absolutely *must* appear to flow gracefully from beginning to inevitable end. None of those washed-out-artsy endings for this movie. It isn't that kind of a movie. What is inessential must be cut away and what remains must convince us it's essential, not like England after it won/lost the war.

My editing friend, Lynzee Klingman, said when I came back to LA and tried to describe the confusion, "Oh, has it gotten like that? Yeah, it gets like that . . . I knew this girl who worked editing the first *Godfather* movie . . . She quit. She told me that Marlon Brando was awful in it and nobody knew what it was about or what they were doing. It was just a giant mess. She couldn't stand it any more so she just quit."

It happens, then, with magazines and restaurants and wars. . . It's so much fun at the beginning and you can envision how wonderfully it will turn out. And without warning the moment appears when what you've begun is no longer yours. The glamour flees and no one can remember it except perhaps Francis with that remark about "perseverance of vision" as he sits with his hands folded across his stomach, his eyes fixed on some point out the window with an idle editing machine in front of him agonizing with Mozart's "rest," the part that's not there, cut out by the artist to make the remainder flow easily from beginning to end so people will have a nice movie to go to where they won't be bored, and Francis can start on a new one.



8. The Great American Novel

We used to hang out at Barney's Beanery for years before Barney died and say, "I wonder who's going to write the Barney's novel?"

Suddenly Ed Keinholz made his huge construction of Barney's and that was the end of it. The Barney's novel was executed.

In New York, people used to say, "I wonder who's going to write the Great American Novel?" When I came out of the screening of the final, three-and-a-half-hour *Godfather, Part II*, I knew that Francis had finished off the idea. The Great American Novel is two movies based on a book that Mario Puzo once told me he wrote "with one hand tied behind my back." It's funny no one thought of it before.

"How do you feel?" I asked Francis, once the film had come out and the lines were circling the blocks.

"I'm glad people like it," he said. "Now I want to get *City* on its feet so that it will break even. . ."

"And then?"

"What I really want to do, Eve, is to start a radio station. That's what I *really* want to do." There was a pause on the 'phone.

"You know, Francis," I said. "Your movie is really a masterpiece. . . You know how I can tell?"

"How?"

"It's flawed."

"Thanks."

"A radio station, eh?"

"A *little* radio station," he stressed.

Just like *The Godfather* was a little gangster picture.

9. The Perseverance of Vision

I used to watch them, those guys with their maroon and white sweaters at Hollywood High, their handsome faces and their invincibility and the way they smiled and said "Hi." They were the casual popular young men who were taller and smarter than the rest of them and if you weren't one of the 50 or so girls who were their rightful

mates, they rarely tossed one of their "Hi" 's your way. The most you could hope to be if you were on the outside was an observer, a receiver of secondhand gossip, a chronicler of The Way He Looked At Her In Physiology 1 And The Way She Looked Away.

Whatever we were all going to be when we grew up, I used to think, will never be anywhere near as vivid and bloody as this. And because we were in Southern California—in Hollywood, even—there was no history for us. There were no books or traditions telling us how we could turn out or what anything meant.

The years passed. The successes turned out to be: the most beautiful blond with the green eyes who married an insurance salesman and moved to the Valley, where she's living happily ever after with three children, not even divorced; the tall strong young football player who teaches art in a high school in downtown Los Angeles; the nervous, brilliant guy who is being nervously brilliant over at Warner Brothers directing his first movie; and the girl with the flaming red hair who is the director of a stewardess school and lives in Marina del Rey.

And whenever I run into one of them, no matter what has become of him or her, I feel a kind of curious affinity with them, because we have managed to live so long after graduating from Hollywood High, because we have managed to live at *all* once we got out of there. For Hollywood High never pretended to be a microcosm of real life. Everything that we knew about real life, *everything* we gleaned from books and movies and history classes and comic books, had snow in it.

On the day before Thanksgiving, when they began putting up the giant tin Christmas trees along Hollywood Boulevard, we had to bow to the realities of real life as determined by the rest of the country, the world.

Perhaps it is this shared empty confusion about reality that draws me to the alumni of a Hollywood childhood, those tin Christmas trees tipped white for snow. Those Christmas cards where everything is peaceful and white.

Very few of those guys in their maroon and white sweaters and their easy walks have survived real life. The casual nonchalance which we prized them for has been dashed to pieces by the real world which, even in Los Angeles, exists. The fierce battle on the baseball field has been plowed under by the fierce battle some of them have just getting up in the morning.

"Francis, too, must have had a patch of time with no history, and must have decided to invent his own."

Out of all of them, I know only one who remains practically identical with that image I have of the boys as they walked across the quad and said "Hi." And he once told me, showing me a picture of himself as he was the day that he hit the home run that won the game between Hamilton and Hollywood, even *he* told me that it's been all downhill since then. And he's probably going to spend the next 20 or so years of his life winning Academy Awards and mixing with a lot of dazzling people like he did at Cannes the year the movie he co-produced won "Best."

He was the Sports Editor of the Hollywood High newspaper when Carol Eastman (who wrote *Five Easy Pieces*) was editor. "But it was so hard to write," he told me, his casual grin flashing the past into the present. "I decided that I didn't have to write. I've been happier ever since."

"You're a bastard, Fred Roos," I told him. "You make all the rest of us write and you get to go around being the producer and the casting director and meeting all those people and people like me have to try and think up good ideas to tickle your fancy."

He laughed. "You don't have to do that. You don't have to do anything. I'm not making you write."

But even as I wrote the above and even as I sat there, I was so pleased to be at last in the company of one of those tall, sweet young men who once wore maroon and white sweaters, that I was faintly delirious. It's not as vivid and bloody as it would have been. But then we're in real life now, not Hollywood High, and it's about art and money and Francis Ford Coppola and Paramount. It's about power and glory and casting Al Pacino's wife. It's not Hollywood High, but nothing ever will be again.

And when I come into a room, Fred smiles, kisses me lightly, and always says "Hi."

And once he said, "Hey, I've got a great idea. Why don't you come up to Reno? You can write something . . ."

"What?"

"Anything. . . I don't know. You're the writer."

Francis once told me that when he went to Le Conte Junior High School (where one third of everyone at Hollywood High came from) he couldn't think of anything but the girls. "They were so fantastically beautiful," he told me, "and they walked around every day at lunch in a circle, around and around and around. I never forgot it.

"I used to wonder what they were like and why they kept walking around and around and around and why they were so fantastically beautiful," Francis said. Francis, who went to 26 different schools when he was growing up in all parts of the country, must have seen those Christmas trees before Thanksgiving too. He, too, had a patch of time with no history and he must have decided to invent his own because he has, through a "perseverance of vision," invented a way to be an artist through movies—and historically that's next to impossible. The movies, like the girls, went around and around and around, and some were beautiful and Francis wondered what they were like, only this being real life, of course, by the time he found out, Hollywood was on the verge of collapse. The beautiful girls have become pale in remembrance.

Time recently reported that *The Godfather* has made $145 million so far. *The Conversation* won the Cannes Film Festival, but hardly anyone went to see it. Francis and Fred became members of the board of directors of something called Cinema 5, a distribution company. Francis held a laminated copy of a check he got for $1,700,000 (for being the executive producer on *American Graffiti*), which he inspected thoughtfully one afternoon and said, "I wonder what I'd do if I were broke tomorrow . . ."

He added, "I wouldn't *mind* being broke."

Before that he'd said, "I'd like to start this place up in the North Pole. . . A sort of toy factory where all the toys were made by little people, children. . ."

Which is more or less the whole thing. Having the children make the toys is like having Francis make the movies.

Historically, of course, there is no precedent. But, then, Hollywood has always been unprecedented, ever since I can remember, when the girls walked around and around and around, their arms linked through the arms of boys in maroon and white sweaters in a past so vivid and bloody.

And even Fred, even *Fred*, who is still one of them, says it's been "all downhill" ever since. ●