Mike Jaggers owes Jude Acers a nickel... Newspapers, magazines, films, words, letters and a criminal trial did not tell the truth: what everyone in front of the stage saw clearly...Step back in time. Watch as Mick Jagger, the Rolling Stones, Santana, Grateful Dead, Flying Burrito Brothers, Jefferson Airplane, Attorney Melvin Belli, Jude Acers, Blue and only 400,000 other people go to see

EXILE TO ALTAMONT

by Jude Acers
US Senior Master

HER HANDS AT ALTAMONT
THE ROAD: PART X

The Rolling Stones' attorney, Melvin Belli, is just standing there in front of drummer Watts and two Stones promo people. He is smiling, not believing his ears as the problem becomes clear. People were screaming at each other as I passed the museum-office fantasia of Belli to visit Robert E. Burger, the San Francisco chess problemist and chessmaster, who has his advertising agency in the same building. I never made it to see Burgermeister, but I saw a lot of cameramen, two news reporters, three luscious secretaries articulate the problem for Belli with a simple question: **"What do you do with at least two hundred thousand plus rock-and-roll fanatics who are already enroute to the firmly committed rock concert that is not firmly committed?"**

Nobody in his right mind would hold the concert now. It was a horrible problem that led to repeated use of the gentlemen's sanitation room by several Stones representatives present. There was a storm of several hundred long distance phone calls from frantic Stones equipment people with nowhere to go, parents phoning state and local police for departing kiddies, and departing kiddies who had no place to tell their parents they were going except somewhere in California. Yes, just watch the newspaper, mama and daddy. Wherever those nice guys called the Rolling Stones go, that's where our whole senior class will be. In the eye of this hurricane Altamont was born.

Charlie Watts was shaking his head with incredulous disbelief, covering his eyes, chain smoking as the golden angel of salvation came. For no reason whatsoever, a total stranger called Belli's office and offered to let the whole monstrous mess come down upon his speedway for the non-existent "publicity value" alone! Watts kept whispering, saying "What publicity value?" to the people present...

Belli handled the whole thing with savvy. He rushed through papers in world record time, got token insurance and made it legal to have the Rolling Stones at Altamont on Saturday morning. It was now Thursday evening! When you're a man of the bar, you gotta run to keep up with these young guys. The owner-manager of the Altamont Speedway rushed to Belli's office. I was escorted out, so that I did not have to witness the final ink stroke of doom.

I could see the plan, so unbelievable that it had a chance to happen. There wasn't anyone, anywhere with two week's public notice. The landowners and neighborhoods would easily obtain a court order and state officials would insist upon the world's highest insurance rates, while health facilities would have to be approved by Conrad Hilton and Hugh Hefner.

Belli simply moved to race 800,000 legs past Altamont area homes before neighborhood people could believe their eyeballs! It's a little hard to hide several hundred thousand people, but that's exactly what happened, as Altamont became the magic place overnight. It will never happen again, of course.

The wonderful audacity of Melvin Belli and the Rolling Stones is that they know when to gamble and how to leave somebody else holding the bag of Hershey bars if something goes wrong. I, for one, have never quite gotten over their manipulation of events that I actually saw, much less many other deals that the Stones made all over the place. The Stones are essentally unstoned. All that is missing is the suit and tie, Brooks Brothers shoes. One of the deals was actually filmed in "Gimme Shelter," and shows how to move fast when trains are going your way. It's like going to school.

How could it happen that 30 tons of electronic equipment, lights, scaffold towers, stage planks could wind up lost at Sears Point when suddenly the wand is waved? They are now supposed to be at Altamont! Oh. Of course, all the highways are jammed with cars and it will not be possible to hold the show, since nothing, not even a nail, is at the closed-down Altamont Speedway. So what happens?

What happened was Chip Monck. He is the miracle stage, light, mirror and equipment manager for the Rolling Stones. Far more important, he will not take "no" for an answer when it seems absolutely impossible to stage a certified disaster, no matter how hard Belli and the Stones are trying. He simply hired everybody on the San Francisco rock scene below the age of 106. They moved equipment to helicopters day and night, having a terrifying time limit and great practical problems as well.

They moved every pound from Sears Point Raceway to Altamont in about one day and were working like berserk beavers on stage and lights early Friday evening. It just cost the Stones $55,000 for starters, and if the Altamont people ever get organized and obtain a court injunction before the show actually starts....., then $80,000 will have been spent on a concert that never was. I swear, it was no different than a neighborhood crap game, except the ante was upped a little.

The Stones people were scared to death. The dues for a forty million dollar business are very high, about to be paid with interest. They could afford to lose a little here or there because of good deals on cheap jeans. But 400,000 dissatisfied customers in one day might affect record sales considerably, might affect the health of the Stones considerably. They joked nervously at Zims's restaurant, but I believed every word.

To understand Altamont you need to know more than the simple change in direction everyone took in two days. Altamont was practically a corporate grave, no water, no facilities for such an event. It was all coming out of the sky. All five groups that were scheduled to play on the program before the Stones were subjected to the most excruciating problems just getting their bodies and equipment there intact. You can imagine what Chip Monck, responsible for the Stones and absolutely everything else, was going through. You parked 20 miles from Altamont and walked on winding roads in the cold with hundreds of fires on both sides of the road. But it was a blast, a lot of fun as we walked toward Altamont, Friday night. People met people, people laughed. Best of all, nobody died.

The most important factor was the refusal of the state and local police to act as a private police force. Quite correctly, they stayed away and performed excellent service directing traffic and hauling away corpses. As traffic was reported bumper-to-bumper for 15 solid miles, the California Highway Patrol advised that all citizens had a right to come, but it was difficult, with no emergency service of any type available. That's how the odds came down (400,000 to 4) as I climbed out of Blue's car. Blue was reciting some of her poetry, which she reads at the Coffee Gallery on Tuesday poet night. Her golden hair spun in a circle. "Christ, we can't go any further."

I laughed. "We're here, Blue, we're here. I'm going to touch the stage, sit just below it and see the Stones!" I would never laugh again at Altamont. I left Blue and walked.

The vibes were right by the fires. Footstomping on the paved road never ceased. You put out your hand and you got a cracker, a cookie, a joint or a nice lady. We carried blankets and bags of food. Nobody tried to haul ice chests from this distance and several were abandoned along the roadside. Liquor, mainly wine and beer, was everywhere. Think what several hundred thousand soda pop and beer bottles will look like on the ground if people do not help clean up. (They did.)

It was 7:47 pm when I saw Altamont. The gates and walls spread over an enormous distance and at least five hills. We were all jammed around those walls, because the gates would not be opened until early morning. Perhaps 10,000 people were sprawled out at my gate entrance alone. Not many people jumped over the fences, though it would have required just a little work. Radios blasted out disc jockeys, who begged people not to move toward the speedway, because "it's all locked up. There's nothing to do but wait and the show can't possibly go on until about 3 o'clock or even later. Please...Please...Wait until tomorrow."

Nobody seemed to have told Monck that the show would be mid-afternoon, if at all. Race that court kid. We could see a small dot through the wooden and wire fences, perhaps a half mile away. It was the stage and one scaffold already. All night long it mushroomed, as I watched people meet people, met some nice ladies and drank water from ten canteens, hoping that I wouldn't get acid zonked like William Bills and his Thanksgiving love potion number nine. This was middle class American safety. The sweet smell of the evil weed which causes insanity, sterility, blindness and sometimes even death was happily everywhere. Nothing seemed wrong. But something was.

Chip Monck was down there all night working on the stage and the enormous power connections required, when the dozens of amplifiers for rock groups go on. The Stones had to be heard for several miles by people who would never even get to see them out in the hills. Chip is a hirsute thin man with an Edwardian moustache. He has been through the mill. He tries to leave no detail untouched, in spite of the fact that he is badly underpaid by the Stones for daily miracles and would leave them because of this. He knew he was surrounded at midnight by a very large city, more people than Hannibal's army were already knocking at the door. He can **hear** them. At dawn the gates open. Security... Security...Security.

After so many years with the greatest touring bands in the world, Chip finally made an irreversible, stupid, horrible mistake. Everybody makes one now and then in hospitals, law offices, airplanes. But Chip really blew it with his lemon, a phone call at the last moment to ask about Hell's Angels to police the concert tomorrow. Would it work? ...Just an idea. ...Wow...what an idea. Bill Graham, the San Francisco multi-millionarie rock promoter, almost lost his mind when he was told about it. You could hear him on the radio, "You're joking... You can't be serious. Really???"

Chip remembered the Stones in London, successfully playing a huge open-air concert with a genuine motorcycle club, the English Hell's Angels equivalent. They had kept the stage supports from collapsing with too many people, helped move equipment. It seems the English do not have their genuine fair share of maniacs. Chip could not conceive of the Hell's Angels of California. What was going through his mind was the past of beloved Britain, not two American Hell's Angels lowering a car elevator on a gasoline attendant because they did not like the service. Chip admitted it was a blunder, but "Thank god for the Stones that they were there!"

Really? How could Chip not have seen the last quarter? He had seen the first half for sure. Only this year did the answers come to me. The same reason Keith Richard had to squint his eyes and step to stage left to see her hands.

At dawn I stood watching the eyes of an Altamont rent-a-cop employee in his green uniform. He was very old and looked sadly at me through the gate. He had watched us for hours in fascination. He was very old and fumbled with cigarettes, burning them and his fingers simultaneously. He asked me if I had seen many pretty girls. I said that I had. He said that in his whole life he hadn't seen as many pretty girls as he should have, living out there. He seemed to know that he had missed all the fun in his life and expected me to remind him. Where have all the flowers gone? Man, you have to get your kicks when you live. Life is meant to be wonderful. Tough luck, man. I said nothing more, however.

You could see people shivering, holding on to each other everywhere. It looked like the Boy Scout Jamboree camping grounds at Valley Forge Women were

everywhere and offered excellent P.V.C. (Practical Viewing Chances) for the unstoned Stone watcher. There was one woman in a white transparent tank top, blue jeans and bare feet. She just came up and latched on to me, squeezing tighter, tighter, **tighter!** I didn't move as she put both tiny feet atop my shoes. I did my best to stay latched on to, as long as she was in the latching mood. I remember that she tried to kiss me, but my glasses got in the way and fell crookedly over my nose. Also her breath steamed up my spectacles as I was paralyzed with heavenly joy. I let them stay steamed rather than release her. Softly she left me as she came. We never said a single word, just a few ummmmns. Years later I saw her through a Greyhound bus window as she crossed the street in San Jose. ...I'm still on the lookout... Someday.

The gates creak open and I open up with the same running that I did in high school high jumping, baseball, football. I'll have you know that my father was an ununamious All-American left halfback at Notre Dame when Knute Rockne coached. He gave me these slightly arched knees and the tremendous power which allows me to walk around and play 100 chess opponents at one time without getting tired at all. I have such crazy, burning energy, such enthusiasm all the time. It is the torch. But fuel is not everything, is it? You must stop, slow down someday, die. I reached the base of the stage and touched home plate. Yes, I would see the great Stones today. This was better than Screaming Yellow Zonkers.

The crowd formed on three sides of the scaffold. It was definitely the largest crowd that I had ever seen, more than Sugar Bowl Stadium's 80,000 already. Only the beginning.

On stage, 100 people were slaving over wires everywhere, climbing all over towers. A man who had been responsible for the Woodstock organization was all over the place, dressed in an imperial fur coat with white fur collar. I saw him in the movies! Woodstock had been minutely planned for six months. Altamont wasn't planned at all. Think about it. Can you believe it?

Still it **looked** very well-organized, and that thing went up two hours after dawn. It was very professional work by all those long haired smelly hippies who aren't supposed to know all about the electronic problems involved. Yes, all that was missing were suits and ties. The stage and towers came out of the sky. And they were popping all sorts of little pills all the way. Just little old benzedrine pills. A man's gotta stay awake, because the show must go on. Guys, how in the hell did you do it? We know not.

At Altamont I saw the most beautiful woman that I have encountered in my lifetime. She was traveling with the Stones and was helping keep people off the stage. To get us to move back 20 yards, they told us that heavy crane equipment was coming soon, presumably from out of the sky. Then a no-man's-land with white twine and red ribbon was edged across the boundary. The long-legged, brown-haired woman would walk very quietly into the vacant space and ask new arrivals to "please move behind the twine." Her body was simply atomic, one of those fantasies we are forbidden to have. She would smile again and again as she made her request. Several men did not move for a moment or two, because they could not believe what had swept around the bend. You could see thousands of heads follow her every move across her land, about 70 yards. As the sun heated up, she began to remove her clothes in stages to reveal a perfect suntan, which is what you get, I suppose, when you jet-set with the Stones. When she was down to the smallest jeans cut-offs and bed-sheet halter top that I have ever seen, there were whispers everywhere. "Please, please, take it all off... Oh, baby, please, please!" The guy on my back was panting like a dog. Everytime she would disappear around the back of the stage you could hear "Baby, please don't go, baby, baby, please don't go. I need you, baby," and more panting. She was the real thing.

I was reminded of Reuben Fine, the US chess grandmaster and world title contender in the thirties. Fine wrote of being absolutely smashed by Linda Darnell, a film starlet who entered a chess tournament room on a whim. She left the grandmasters desperately trying to complete their games moments later.

The beautiful Altamont lady disappeared about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and I never saw her again... The lady in the car who mouths I-love-you in "American Graffitti" and hangs a right, leaving you forever trying to find her. You see her from the plane or Greyhound bus, always the impossible dream.

The day was going well. For several morning hours there was mainly speculation as to the monster groups that would play with the Stones. At 10 am the public address system was working through all the speakers and could be heard for miles. The LSU Tiger Football Staduim P.A. in Baton Rouge made more noise when it announced that we had scored again against the bad guys and we were leading 40-0. Still, not bad for a first try, not bad at all.

I saw people as far as I could see behind me, a mile at least of wall-to-wall sitting people. The hills outside the speedway and some trees were sprouting patches of people by noon. I consider that 400,000 is a very conservative estimate. I could not see behind the stage, where people were reportedly stacking up like ants when there was no more room at all in my territory.

The Hell's Angels arrived quietly and were doing a fine job as informal policemen. I saw them speak to hundreds of people and move them off the stage with no problem before noon. Two wine jugs were going from one Angel to another but very little was being drunk. I wondered how it would feel waiting 24 solid hours, including the last 14 directly in front of the stage. Would I be tired, inattentive when the Stones took their positions on stage? It occurs to me now that I was probably as well placed to see everything on all sides of the stage (save the trailer and rear section) as anyone possibly could be. I was intending to get up close, that's all. Only one person had a better view...

All night long, the Jefferson Airplane were rushing more than a thousand miles to go on stage in the early afternoon. They would arrive almost dead, but anything to make the "concert of the century" happen. They were still an hour away as Santana was set up to go, racing that court order.

It is curious that accounts never mention that the Rolling Stones were actually on the scene at dawn. They were checking everything, talking to technicians all over the place. You had to look close to realize that the "prima donna" Stones were right down there with the roadies. As people were talking of this or that Stone and citing facts galore, the Stones were all over the place, hardly noticed by the crowd at all. They left after two hours in a chopper.

Chip Monck kept saying over the P.A. system that the stage was in danger of collapse because so many people were standing on it. Agreed. The Angel cops began to hustle a few truants off, but nobody was hurt. If the Stones did not forsee the aftermath, which I am about to describe, they cannot be blamed for. What were they doing all over the place, if not trying to make the program work? The weather was more than satisfactory, as the show went on a whole hour early.

In spite of reports of orgies galore, I could see only about ten people without their clothes. They were very important to me, as I am fiercely proud of the freedom options which America provides for the individual. Freedom is not made possible by meaningless legislation or pious moral tomes. Freedom is made possible by doing exactly what you please, by seeing to it that others are allowed to do all that they please, if humanly possible. You test freedom by the extreme, by sitting at the front of the bus, no matter what the pecker-woods tell you, by drinking at the white- (or black-) only water fountain when you're not supposed to, by refusing to follow the program just because every one else does. You defend the right of a pornographic movie producer to show all the films he pleases, because to kill his options is to murder your own, and, in the end, to cede liberty for all. It is that serious a matter. The situation in America is going to get better and better, as the Supreme Court will inevitably defend freedom for the individual and the individual will take his freedom when it is denied temporarily.

The most famous example of freedom option is Robert Fischer, who never plays chess on US teams or competes in US championships unless he damn well feels like it. In the Soviet Union Fischer would carry his own luggage, lose his Volvo, lose his apartment, lose the right to publish "My 60 Memorable Games," lose his living pension, work in a factory and finally join Alexander Solzhenitsyn in a forced labor camp. Fischer says the US system builds character. This is not true. The US system allows characters, allows infinite choices, if you don't surrender them. It is my firm belief that the US government doesn't govern!

While living in California I have seen the courts and police bend over backward to to tolerate every possible extreme that does not directly harm others. The tolerance challenge is valued to test them as well. You only hear about the times when injustice is found, not when the challenge is often met successfully or when progress is made in inches. One hundred years from Altamont, America will be free. It is all done in inches, by streaking, by going to the grocery store nude, by standing on a soap box and screaming out your views, even though you are thought mad. Freedom is won by refusing to murder people in Vietnam just because somebody tells you to, by refusing to do **anything** just because someone tells you to. The options are there, if you will only believe they are there. Injustice can be ruthlessly challenged by one man, even in the admittedly shaky America of today.

At about eleven in the morning the beer for the Hall's Angels began to arrive. Their payment for police work was $500 worth of Budweiser. Huge crowds make for lines of 300 at the sanitation facilities. A tent for bad drug reactions was not getting at lot of people with very bad drug reactions. Volunteer medics were all that saved many people. The bad trippers were the most serious cases that I have ever seen. Bodies with contorted faces were passed from hands to hands toward backstage.

I am sorry to report that the public denial by the Hell's Angels is a total lie. They clubbed people senseless who were already helpless in front of the stage on bad trips. I saw at least ten clubbings of helpless, harmless overdose cases. The Angels did it all, were totally at fault for all the violence I saw the entire day. It was a sport with the Angels.

I felt a tap on my shoulder and an insulated pink wire droped beside me. Some poor technician had to run a ground wire from two camera towers more than a hundred yards to the stage! This meant digging a furrow in the earth, burying the wire, scraping in the earth and repeating the process as he waded through people jam-packed on the ground all the way. I was the last frontier. He was very happy it was over. Another one of those long-haired hippies that you call on when the job is tough.

Just to the left was your lovely teenangel, trying to nudge her 15-year old boyfriend into turning on with little pellets. "Please take some. It won't hurt, baby. It's O.K. Please...Please." Teenangel was doing her best, but his head was shaking. Why anybody needed to turn on with teenangel around I could not imagine. She began to kiss him several hundred times, trying to push the magic tablets into his mouth by tongue propulsion. All the while she was working on his midsection like George Foreman. He made her struggle for her victory quite a while.

There was the snap of flashbulbs on my right as several cameras worked on a large fat man who was harmlessly giving us his finest streaking effort. As far as I could tell, the Hell's Angels were about ten in number on stage. There were about a hundred laughing Hell's Angels and lady friends atop two buses a block away from the stage. So far in the morning, so good.

You may find it impossible to believe that less than 20 Hell's Angels were going to cut people, smash humans with cue sticks, while their "brother Angels" were busy with their many women atop the buses and did not even dream of lifting a toe in violence. Believe me, that was exactly what happened. The "brother Angels" were busy having a lot of fun, applauding each group enthusiastically and putting that Budweiser where it belonged. Sunshine and Rolling Stone beer and ladies leave little for a man but hedonism. If the idiots policing the stage were so stupid as to not meet some nice lady and have a good time, that was t.s. Nobody, but nobody on the magic bus caravan had anything to do with mayhem that day. There were a hundred nice-guy Angels and a few murderers.

There are those who hold that a "revolutionary," a sadist, a murderer must be without a lady. The theory pretty well held up at Altamont as I began to give the stage Angels the Dr. Hunger S. Thompson once-over. The six men were the bad mothers, the tough honchos with badly scruffed motorcycle jackets and spooky "I'm so tough" black eyeglasses. Several had the white undershirt protruding beneath the jacket as in "Blackboard Jungle." For several hours I noted their conduct. They talked only to themselves and were totally unresponsive to women. I never once saw one smile, talk to a girl offstage or any evidence of happines. They were very poor party material, LSU fraternities and sororities please note. **I never saw an Angel on stage even glance at a girl anywhere.** I watched this closely.

It happened at different times for different people, the disillusionment, the terror, the self-blame sickness. The blast came to an end for me ten minutes before the Jefferson Airplane began to play. It was the first serious play-for-keeps incident of the day, the most horrible attack anyone witnessed at Altamont and the worst atrocity that I have ever witnessed. To this day I am unable to explain how the victim would possibly have lived. It was never reported in any account of Altamont.

A large hole opened up in the crowd as two Angels were chasing a photographer. People cleared a 50-yard radius and screamed in horror as the photographer was driven to his knees by a dozen blows from sharpened cue sticks that cut deeply. We were forced to watch a man have his whole face shredded. You could see the bone protruding on one side of his face. He was on his knees with arms fastened about his head. The two obviously insane Angels simply stuck their pointed daggers into every hold in the man's head and twisted away. Nobody helped the poor man because nobody was armed. The Angels even jabbed into the earth to get to the man's mouth and nose.

Suddenly both baboons stepped back and told the man to stand up and empty his camera, a camera which they could have taken dozens of times already. The victim stood up very slowly, cut perhaps 50 times and bleeding in faucet streams. There was no visible face, only blood.

He dropped the camera, wrapped around his wrist by a piece of leather. He staggered straight backward into screaming people and bled on everybody. He never said one word, as people just kept pushing him. There can be no question that a doctor saw the man and rushed to him. He could not have lived without a lot of help, fast. All day long, there would be encores. Each time we thought that this could be the last time, but baby...I don't know.

My feelings toward the Angels were supressed but clearly homicidal. The Angels would have died on the spot if they had attacked any of the numerous uniformed servicemen on leave from bases all over California. They would have been shot to death if they had so attacked state police who came to cart away a corpse 12 hours later. They carefully picked safe targets. One point should be mentioned. No women

see page 14

EXILE TO ALTAMONT

from page 13

were attacked in my view. I read reports of several such attacks, but I never saw them and must wonder if they happened at all. In any event, the real Angels were standing up. The winds of change were viewing the Angels thumbs down.

There is a myth about town-raiding Hell's Angels. There is this aura of their toughness, their speed, their love for action. It is a simple truth that nobody is tougher, faster, or loves actions more than the FBI, state cops, local cops. Their bag is hunting, latent legal homicide. The Angels have no chance to live if these groups try to kill them.

A professional hunter is what is needed to deal with an Angel, and, contrary to mythology, there are never any shortages of volunteers to go after Angels. Action-loving police are not intimidated by the Angels...ever. All they want is any legal reason. You reap what you sow. There is no group more hunted, more severely restricted in liberty than the post-Altamont Angels. I have even met people who are sorry for them.

A Wyoming state trooper tells me that truck drivers regularly run Angels off the road. Police in places like Wyoming, Utah, Vermont, Iowa, Oklahoma keep the Angels moving. If they stop, they go to jail. Police simply cannot tolerate traveling motorcycle vagabonds that are armed, distraught, hungry and promising us they're going to prove they are tough guys. It is not enough to say that a few bad guys ruined the finest performances by popular groups that California had ever seen. It is enough to say that liberty and something else goes against the grain of Angels who murder club members and hangers-on, stuff bodies down abandoned water wells and beat up people who do not threaten them in any manner. It is no surprise that so many Angels are in jail a great deal of the time. After seriously disrupting several benefit concerts in San Francisco, the Angels found it very difficult to get the American Civil Liberties Union to spend their never adequate funds and resources on a bunch of losers and common punks. All Angels are not bad, we are told. The idea is more than enough. You cannot embrace evil's chariot without paying the dues. I believe the dues were earned.

We stayed because of the promise of Stones candy. We wanted to meet people, have a good time. It was an unreal world. We were day-trippers. It was a war fought by one army, sadists. There would be no warning. One person would scream curses at Angels or lean over the side of the stage and not get a glance. Another would be attacked for a harsh glance or giving the Angels the royal order of the eagle finger insignia. Or nothing at all. Or by mistake.

"Thanks for everything, guys. Are we supposed to love you anyway?" screamed teenangel's boyfriend as he was clubbed three times. Teenangel was a little shook up now.

Next on the bill? Time to take care of 300 pounds of Mr. Nude America. He had been bopping merrily around and was really enjoying himself for an hour or two. The Angels didn't even look at him for hours. K-zoom....Then he gets cuesticks and is blasted to the ground. This is freedom. This is America. Middle Class America (MCA) is cheering. He got what he deserved, right gang? Go get 'em, Angels! Murder a hundred and twenty-two women and children in a ditch and nobody lays a hand on your bod. But take off your clothes and wham-bam-boom-k-zoom.

Two Angels pull up with motorcycles and backseat ladies right in front of me. A parked motorcycle is hovering, **threatening** to tip over, probably bumped by an Angel bike. It is now time to learn why police are necessary and very important to our society.

A woman on the Angel chopper points to a little 60-ish man below the corner of the of the stage. "He kicked it with his foot. I saw him." It was clearly a capital crime and an Angel jumped on the man's head and kicked him senseless.

"When you are looking at your motorcycle and it's the only thing that you've got in the world and somebody messes with it, you're gonna get that cat. Especially if he's a long-haired chickenshit peacenik creep!" we hear the Angel explain on a nice family type, call-in radio program. Yeah, go get those guys MCA, those long-haired hippie creeps who told us (long before Ali, Johnson or Nixon) that anybody who went to die in Vietnam was out of his ever lovin' mind, dying for absolutely no reason and killing countless innocent people. This is America. Fifty thousand guys dead for absolutely nothing.

Joe Namath, yes, creamy creamed Broadway Joe of the Nixon enemies list, asks us where were our priests, our rabbis, our ministers during the sixties, and why didn't they tell us that playing golf, football, chess, ping-pong, pool, pinball or **anything** seemed like a better idea than murdering everybody in Vietnam. "What are we **doing** over there?" asks little Joe after a short visit to the Orient. Watch out, Joe. Steer clear of that motorcycle in the parking lot. Don't cough. This is America. You weren't supposed to say that, Joe. Put the boy down on page three, John.

Chip Monck was in visible pain, holding his hands clenched. He pleaded, babied the Angels. More blood. He had to keep them. They were the only crowd control he could employ now. He would rightly bear the blame for inviting Hell's Angels and pay a hundredfold for a rare lemon. He refused to make any public service announcements. He must concentrate. All the musicians were in danger.

The Jefferson Airplane knew something was very, very wrong. They saw three people with head cuts in the medical tent as they climbed wearily on stage at the rear. They did not know the only danger was a few men on stage. They were told nothing, and wisely so.

Marty Balin, lead singer of the Plane now violated a rule which the whole class had learned earlier in the week. If you want to go and fight with a Hell's Angel moron, you should have a knife, gun and full intentions to get killed. The commitment must be total. Angels pack weapons. Marty could not stand to see a man clubbed senseless as he was singing above. Balin dropped down and was hit immediately, out cold in front of teenangel.

The base player of the Plane stepped to the microphone. "Say, man. I just want to thank you guys, the Hell's Angels, for knocking out my lead singer. Thanks a lot." With that simple sentence the coin was flipped and there was unbelievable Angel congregation on the right stage wing. Grace Slick screamed, "Cool down!" and skipped among several cursing, very angry Angels, who took over the microphone for a minute or two. She was smiling and lovely, not nervous at all. Grace Slick did not see what I saw. It was my first blade of the day. Grace Slick did not see what I saw. It was my first blade Our hero was standing there clenching the blade and took his first step toward Grace. He was swarmed over by three other Angels, restrained. It is my unprovable opinion that he would have stabbed Grace Slick and the base player to death. He was crazy, and they moved him off the stage and went with him to be sure he was off for good. They **knew** he would do it, period.

Well, well. Marty Balin crawled back on stage for a second try at opening their act at Altamont. A few people in the audience were crying, while many more were dancing, trying to have a good time. I do not remember a single thing about the Jefferson Airplane music that day. A strange Moses-Messiah type man was dancing on a truck behind them in a flowing white robe. He was kicked off, of course.

"O.K., so a few guys are going to get it in a crowd this big. Just don't you be the one, Roy," said teenangel. "Please, Roy, don't get killed. Please don't die." It was so romantic at Altamont.

Well, well. If I was going to see all these bestial things, I was going to see the Stones in one piece, as a reward for surviving. I sat down. In the next ten hours the Angels only beat up six people directly in front of my section. I just said, "Well, golly, gee, there goes another one! Gee, that is tough." Just like one of the slaves at the German death camps had to say, "Well, gee, there goes another one," as the body slid past into the furnance. It's just my body here, nothing else. Don't mind me. It's not me.

Santana had begun with a very bad beating, but they had to stop in the middle of a song only once. Not believing what they could plainly see was unprovoked deadly assault on people, they played very fast and left very fast. The Grateful Dead were badly shaken by rumors of violence and only too happy to play after the Rolling Stones. Can you imagine any group willing to follow the Stones in order to avoid getting stabbed sooner? The Grateful Dead were very grateful to be let off the meat-hook, playing the goodbye march with the most wonderful energy and taking a **long, long** time to set up after a man was stabbed to death.

If I'd been the equipment man for the Grateful Dead, a detour would most certainly have sidetracked everything. The Dead would have reclaimed their amplifiers, drums, guitars in Viadivostok, believe me. At the very least, I would have dug a hole beneath the stage and buried all the equipment and myself for several days.

Only one group had magic. They were spotted in a Los Angeles discotheque by the Stones and were almost unknown, invited to play in mid-afternoon before 400,000 people. This is known as "exposure" in the trade. They were the Flying Burrito Brothers, a first-rate country and western offshoot of the Byrds.

Not a single thing went wrong as they played non-stop. For a solid hour frisbees shot into the air, people danced, people stood in one place and smiled, people just watched each other go crazy. Not one single Angel cracked a skull or broke an arm anywhere. Everyone had to notice this peace and the lull was hard to understand.

I reasoned that it was half-time and the band was playing. The second half would see our home team, the Altamont Angels, score very heavily. They would be out to make up for intermission, so as not to need sudden-death overtime in the Rolling Stones set. They tried, but they never made it.

Snap. . .crack. . .crack. . .boom went the cuesticks. But it was getting late. The people that were cut caught the eye of David Crosby, dressed in buckskin, and looking like Marco Polo. He was actually able to say, "People . . .people. . .Please, why are we fighting? Why are we beating on one another? That's not necessary!"

I sat there, incredulous. What kind of crap was being fed to each entertainer backstage? It must have been a miracle of artist management. They didn't dare tell the performers anything! The musicians just stepped out on the stage and learned what it was all about. They couldn't have been told even bare essentials of Angel ferocity during the long-gone Jefferson Airplane performance, or some acts would not have appeared even with Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday as police escorts.

I hung in there hour after hour and tried to look as quiet, inconspicuous as possible. I would see the Stones, score points against the Angels team by leaving alive and "well." They were trying to get all the little dots, but I figured that if the Stones hurried they couldn't get to the whole city. The people to my right and left had been cut. I was still in there.

There was no question that Chip Monck did not tell the Rolling Stones the truth. How could he? They absolutely had to perform at the most dangerous location imaginable. Chip wisely refused to panic the Stones in the backstage trailers. How can you tell five guys to watch out for tremendous punches and knives from six Hell's Angels on stage and to ignore the crowd entirely? How would you feel if your job depended on the mood of six Angels walking in front of your five multi-millionaire horses? A little nervous? You'd tell the Stones, "It's a little rough out there, but it will go off okay. Play as fast as possible. Uhh. . .good luck, guys."

They waited until dark to put the Stones on two hours late and let everything cool down. Without even making the sign of the cross, Chip had the pink lights flipped on and gave a fast intro: "Ladies and gentlemen, the greatest rock-and-roll band in the world -- the Rolling Stones!" A tremendous roar, but I had expected it to be deafening.

With no sign of nervousness, the Rolling Stones stepped briskly into hell. They were icy and could not see the crowd, blinded by bright camera lights. Charlie Watts sat down, thumped the drums twice to be sure they worked. Keith Richard plugged his guitar in to my far right, while Mick Jagger stopped all over the stage directly in front. "Well, hello, San Francisco!. . .Hello!. . .hello to the people in the hills. We can't see you, but we know you're out there. Ha! ha! Keep cool, baby. . .keep cool. Are we ready? Yes, we're ready."

I noted that in semi-darkness Mick Taylor and Bill Wyman were able to see the crowd on their right. They were therefore badly scared almost immediately, but would just keep on playing. We were just six minutes away from her hands. The Stones opened up with wonderful coordination and wonderful sound that lasted through the first number and 30 seconds into Chuck Berry's "Oh, Carol." The Rolling Stones would now pay for their forty million dollars and cheap jeans.

Keith Richards turned his whole body away from the Stones and fought the lights for a good look at a blurred hassle of human beings. He saw a beating. He stopped and screamed out, "Hey, man! If that guy doesn't stop hitting that cat over there, we're going to split. I mean it, man! We're gonna split right now." He pointed down to the crowd and perhaps it stopped. Keith did not know what was going on.

They didn't wait though. The Stones were into "Sympathy for the Devil," when Keith Richards saw more bobbing shadows and stepped close to the stage edge to look directly down, squinting his eyes. One minute to go. She was moving to the front.

I could spot the incredible scene clearly. Angels were walking directly in front of the Stones on several occasions. Mick Jagger bobbed and weaved through Hell's Angels that were all over the place on stage! Trying desperately to keep the Angels cool, Mick passed his wine jug to an Angel, took it back a moment later, gave it to another Angel, while singing like crazy. Two terrific punches barely missed Mick Jagger! The Angels were getting jealous, I supposed. I will never again see any show that horrible, that impossibly staged, with both peasants and Shakespearian actors side-by-side. The Stones heard people screaming, but they had heard screaming many, many times before.

The press of people was not that great. The crowd was not threatening, but it was tightly packed about five feet from the stage. They did not know that it was already over. Keith Richards got the message by stepping over to the edge of the light.

He saw her hands instantly, sent his guitar spinning in the air, caught by its leather strap. Both of his arms went wide outstretched toward Mick Jagger, who was racing across stage toward him, prancing to a halt with microphone in hand.

Keith pointed to her hands, horrified. Mick could see them. So could I. There had been a man's shoulders going up and down, and people stepping away. Then, she had gone down with both hands, dipped them in a man's blood and raised them high, so that they would know. The blood curled around her wrists. She wiped her hands on a coat in front of her.

Keith said, "Mick, I think somebody's hurt bad down there. I think somebody stabbed him." Aha! She knew they would catch on. The Stones had stopped playing in the middle of a number, except for Charlie Watts, who thumped drum beats to avoid losing his mind immediately. Charlie Watts did not look bored now. He was watching every Angel around his drums. He was scared absolutely shitless. He was about to see the finale.

Mick Jagger did not want to believe the man had been stabbed to death. He called out, wonderful showman that he is, for us all to sit down on the ground, or the show would not continue. He was soothing, good vibrations. "Now, is anybody hurt? Tell me, is anybody hurt?" Believe me, nobody answered. "Is everybody all right?. . . Is anybody hurt?. . . .It looks like we need a doctor over here. Can anybody get a doctor over by the stage?" Nobody really knew that the man was dead except the people on stage and a group of people about the body. The dead man's girlfriend had his blood on her dress and sweater. You know, your typical Saturday afternoon picnic scene.

"We're splitting, man. That's it. We gotta go now," said Keith Richards.

Suddenly, an Angel rushed on stage to tell the stunned Stones at the microphone that a man had been stabbed, but that he had "a piece. . .a gun."

Keith said, "He had a gun? A gun. . .really? What was he doing with it?"

Angel replied, "Waving it in the air, toward the stage."

Believe me, Keith Richards wanted to go right then. But O.K. Play on. See how it turns out. Play "a cool-down number that we'll make up" on the spot. Mick Jagger didn't sing and had everybody sit down again. I had been twice knocked to the ground by a sea of people trying to fight for home. Thousands were leaving. Keith kept thinking they should quit, leaving the crowd to kill each other. I am sure that several thousand people were screaming at one time. It was that bad.

O.K. I'm going to put the finale to you straight. As the Rolling Stones picked up the show and played frantically to get out of California the body was dragged slowly across the stage,, to the doctor's tent in the rear. Yes, I mean the body went right between Keith and Mick Jagger, right past Charlie Watts, leaving a trail of blood as the corpse went. You didn't hear about that in Rolling Stone or Time magazine, did you? You didn't hear about that on the radio or television, did you? It really happened. Ask anybody who was actually there. We all saw the body go by the Stones, as they watched and played good old rock-and-roll. It was unbelievable.

Look at "Gimme Shelter," the Altamont film that shows almost everything that happened. You will never see the most horrifying moment the Rolling Stones have ever experienced, as a body goes by while they are playing wide open. Jagger's head tilted, tilted toward the body as it went slowly, slowly on the stage between lead guitar and the drums. Think about it. How do you rehearse for a number like that, I wonder? How do you pull off an act like that? What do you do for an encore. . . die?

The Rolling Stones played a tremendous set, played as if their lives depended on it. The Angels mercifully laid off attacking the Stones onstage. The Angels cleared a path behind the stage during the last number. They were playing as fast as possible, as few tunes as possible, to get the hell out of there. There would be no encore, no second return to the stage, buster.

I had never seen Rolling Stones run. They were the fastest rock-and-roll band that I have ever seen, when they headed for their helicopter, waiting a block away. It was very impressive running. They were out of there in two minutes flat, in the air, leaving the knaves, the fools, the pawns, forever.

I still see her hands at Altamont. I began walking, walking, walking.

Keith Richards did not wait a moment when his helicopter downed at San Francisco International Airport. He jumped on a commercial airliner and stayed on it all the way to London. . . . . .

We'll meet again. We are blood brothers, Keith and I. When I remind him about her hands, he probably won't care about her. . . . .She was too plastic. . . . .She was too young. . . . . .

She was teenangel.