

# The Lighter Side

## The Final Chapter of the Nick Ronco Story

### That You May See the Meaning of Within

By: Liz McGehee

Time and space are relative in this dimension, so please assume that Nick earned enough money to finance his schemes. Implementing them was the rub. Time to call Betty.

The phone would not stop ringing and it might be someone important on the other line, like her agent, so Betty Ronco felt obligated to make a mad dash from the shower to the den where the phone beckoned her. Her apartment was furnished in early-late-modern wicker and bamboo furniture an admirer who had seen her on *The Today Show* had sent her from Waccamaw Pottery and Furniture Outlet.

A little path of water drips followed her into the den and onto a vinyl-coated wicker couch. She picked up the leaf from the branch of her palm tree phone. The breathing on the other end could only belong to one person. Betty had gone straight but she knew she'd give all that up to Nick at the drop of a hat unless her ability to say no had improved--and she knew it hadn't.

"Get a bus ticket to Ann Jordan Farm, tell the neighbors to water your plants and check the mail,

and meet me tomorrow for lunch at the farmhouse," the breathing ordered. Then click and it was gone. Something smells pretty fishy, Betty thought.

**And just how does one go about taking over the world?** It starts with a basic desire to understand what it is to be human. There aren't any qualifications for the task of trying to understand existence. Nick Ronco's do nicely. It's not like joining the Columbia Record and Tape Club where you get thirteen albums for a penny then you send this card in each month if you don't want that month's selection and forget to send it in and then get this album that you don't want and can't pay for. Nothing's cheap but you aren't stuck with an idea.

Nick took one of his few outdoors thinking walks the night after he talked to Betty. There were always too many distractions. Gnats and mosquitoes and the humidity kept him from his mental exercises.

And tonight there were all these people coming back from a fishing expedition. One kid, with bright red hair cut like Opie Taylor's, was screaming and giggling about the rattle from a dead snake his dad had found on the road a while back. He had put it in his pocket

(with the blueberries he had picked along the way back to the farmhouse) and it had now turned a lovely shade of pale blue.

Nick sat down on the pebbly edge of the water just before sunset. The water was solid brown with holes of yellow blinking on and off and on like some natural neon lights. The sky was just enough blue and the clouds were just so white that he felt like he was riding in an airplane. Everything seemed so close. Nick had always wondered if certain beings, deities, cosmic watch-makers really existed and he had never come up with any answers. Part of him said that if this supreme thing did exist then why would it let so many people suffer? Part of him said that it might exist because only something so mystical could have created and inspired all of the beautiful art and music that he pretended to understand. He felt that man deserved a lot of the credit for getting himself into the awful predicament he's in now, but that he also deserved a by-line for the good things he's done. Nick tried to avoid getting deep because it got him nowhere. When his plans were fulfilled, Nick was going to hire people to deep-think for him.

He walked back to the house the same way he had come. Continuity was the key to his plan. It had to have something in it that would

slip through history without detection like jello or rayon or red dye number two or saccharin or the Bee Gee's or Three's Company or the National Enquirer.

Jello--that's it, Nick thought. So it was.

The next morning, Nick used his savings to corner the jello market. A few weeks later, the heart of his plans gelled. Nick had hired retired crop dusters to seed clouds all over the world with lime green jello mix. Empty oil tankers now filled with lime jello powder were to have several accidental spills in strategic waterways such as the Panama and Suez Canals. All of the nation's rivers and lakes and swimming pools and water reservoirs were to be in undated with green jello. Entire islands were to be surrounded with Christo bands of green. People could, of course, buy Ronco dejellifiers for a mere \$19.95, renounce their respective citizenships, and pledge their loyalty for one Ronco world, under Nick Ronco, indivisible, with liberty and justice for no one. Simple yet effective. Even better, the jello was really raspberry flavored.

Betty would play a housewife on Ronco jello commercials. Next, she would become President of the Junior League of the Nick Ronco

Society, a group of Ronco loyalists in charge of distributing propaganda. Finally, Betty would become queen, first lady, head woman of the Ronco Empire.

**When it rains, it gells.** At least now it did. Jello was oozing all over everything, down skyscrapers and chimneys, across astroturf baseball diamonds, over hills, and through woods up to the doorstep of Granny Ronco's humble abode. The world knuckled under. Nick decided that it was time for the Ronco's to try domestic life again, so he bought Graceland, Elvis' mansion in Memphis, and had it shipped to Washington somewhere on Pennsylvania Avenue. Life as we know it ceased to exist.

**But even in its darkest, deepest, blackest, most awful hours,** mankind can realize the unexpected. Simply being becomes important enough that it not only triumphs but prevails, sometimes--like this time--in limbo, in a cocoon, waiting to wake up with all the colors and trappings that being entails.

The circle sun sank over the new Ronco mansion in a blaze of pink and yellow and orange and red lines with a little strip of green below it and streaks of blue dotted with check mark birds all around like a kid's picture meticulously crafted during art period in first grade.

## The Perfect College—Try Us, You'll Like Us

By: Malinda McCall

Remember your junior and senior years at high school? You got lots of neat mail from many obscure places, and all of them were supposedly simply dying for you to go to them and learn at their institutions. Often the one university that appealed to you did not appeal to anyone else in your family. You needed a college geared to all tastes. Unfortunately, that is most unlikely to ever exist: "the perfect school" is a figment of some philosopher's overheated imagination. Sort of like the concept of Treeness or the Shadow Metaphor. . .so.

The following is an example of a college most people would presumably love to attend. Happily, it is most fictitious (and you'll see why) Imagine receiving a letter saying something like this:

"This student has just taken a course at our prestigious college entitled 'How To Worry Your Parents To Death and Inherit Big and Live Comfortably In Idleness For The Rest Of Your Natural Life.' You too can learn to eliminate some of your mother's more annoying habits (like calling on the telephone every six months or so) by using some simple methods we can teach you for a nominal fee. Just contact our Dean of Parent Relations, Dean Corleone. Here's what that young lady who took our course had to say about it to her mother:

"Hello? What? Oh. . .(sigh heavily) hi, mom. Nope. I'm NOT behaving myself admirably at all. Nor am I eating my veggies, or

getting eight hours of sleep each night, or being the slightest bit angelic. I'm doing just fine! I'm mixing with massive amounts of charmingly unsavory persons. I study every other week or so, I go to a wild party every other night, I miss most of my classes due to

acute spasms, and I listen to lots of loud, obnoxious music (I'd classify it as being new wave, heavy metal, acid rock, new romantic, punk rock and a smidgen of top-40 hits mostly). I'm taking a course (sculpture) in Art with nude male models and I plan to spend the rest of my college career learning how to play the synthesizer, bass guitar and mandocello from this dude named Animal. He sometimes answers to Al. Oh—I've painted my fingernails and toenails bright lavender...to match my new hairdo...and guess what? I've actually decided what I'm going to minor in already! Yeah, mom, I've decided to get a degree in "How to Harrass the Police and Break the Law in an Obnoxious but Creative Manner Frequently but Anonymously." No, that's not a cold I have. Those "prescription" pills you found? Oh dear. (Ahem) No, nothing is wrong. Just throw them down the toilet. My voice? Yes, a bit scratchy. I promise it's not a cold, momma. It must of been that

bottle of Jack Daniels. . .what? I'm not as think as you drunk I am, Mother! By the way, how does one remove rodents from within one's domicile? My roommate let his science experiment escape and .

.huh? No, we don't really have a roach problem anymore. I think the rats ate them all. We used to find those two-inchers lying in wait in the shower stalls but not anymore. The rats ate my marshmallow and liverwurst sandwich too. I just had an insatiable craving for it, I suppose. I could really go for a pickle right

now, too. What about my roomie? Oh, he's great, a real dollface, when he's not out with those naughty terrorist buddies of his or practicing transcendental meditation on top of the roof. . .Bye mom. Oh, before you go! I learned a new word today. Wanna hear it? Oh. Well, goodbye mom. Call back when you haven't the time. I love

me too. See you later. . ."

See how simple that technique is? A few more months of such creative troublemaking, and your authority problems are half over. The more hostile you learn to be, the faster the legacy. That's our policy. Try us, you'll like us."

I'm pleased that I go to Salem, and now I'm more firmly convinced. Whew!

## Epicure Open To Suggestions

By: Maryanne Downs and Wayne DeBlois

**This is the first in a series of articles which will be written by Epicure Food Service personnel concerning the services of Epicure within the refectory.**

**We feel that this effort is necessary - in addition to the food committee's - in order to keep open lines of communication between you and your food service.**

**Since we are often asked questions in reference to what the food service is about, we will answer the following questions and any others you may have in a question-answer format.**

**Q. What is Epicure?**

A. Epicure Management Services Incorporated is Salem College's agent employed to provide meals and special catered events for the students, faculty and staff.

Epicure's home office is located in Rock Hill, S.C. In addition to Salem College and Academy, Epicure provides services for schools such as Agnes Scott, Guilford and Winthrop. Epicure, as Salem's food service agent, hires and compensates all employees, and purchases all necessary food and supplies.

**Q. Why do we have family style dinners?**

A. Family style dinners are traditional to Salem College and Academy. It has been this way for years by the decision of Salem College administrators. Salem College also decides times and types of meals and in addition the special events provided for the students.

**Q. For suggestions, changes or general comments what should you do?**

A. First contact your dorm representative from the food committee or talk to your food service managers in the refectory. They welcome any input - positive or negative - so feel free to voice your opinions.

**Trivia Question:** It is recommended that Epicure has nine special events a year. How many special events can you list that Epicure provides in a year? (i.e. Thanksgiving, Sophomore Senior, Fall Fest, etc...)

Please give your written answers to Wayne DeBlois your food service director!! Also bring your written questions which you would like to see answered in future editions of *The Salemite*.