

SAY WHAT?

Rainbow wants to shoot my streakin' friend

I was talking with my old childhood buddy Bob Smith the other day when I noticed he wasn't wearing any clothes.

"Bob, buddy," I said, "I know you're glad to see me, but..."

"I'm protesting," he said.

"Protesting? Protesting what, 50-50 fabrics?"

"No. I'm protesting the fact that I can't go nekkid on campus anymore."

"Ahhh, I see. You mean the new ruling that prohibits streaking."

"Yes. I feel it's my fundamental right as a human being to strip off all my clothes and run around wherever and whenever I feel like it."

"I'm not going to go into your personal life, Bob, but don't you know that it violates several laws and that the administration finds potential for personal injury in it?"

"Personal injury to whom?" he snorted.

"Women, I guess."

"How?"

Several visions came to my mind, but my superego fended them off with a baseball bat.

JOHN BLAND

less filling

"Well, don't you know that they also think it's degrading to women?"

"It's not degrading to women, it's degrading to me."

"Degrading to...?"

"See, whenever I get nekkid and run around through a bunch of girls' dorms, not only am I providing them with entertainment, I'm giving myself a good ego reduction."

"How?"

"Do you know how degrading it is when a girl laughs at a nekkid guy?"

"All too well."

"Then you understand perfectly."

"If they don't want to look they can close their eyes. But show me one girl who doesn't want to," he smirked.

After much thought, I realized that only one woman I knew would probably not want to look, so I asked for her thoughts on the matter.

"Rainbow," I asked, "how do you feel about streaking?"

"Male or female?"

"Male, of course."

"It's degrading to women."

"Why?"

"It forces us to look at something we may not want to look at."

"Can't you close your eyes?"

"Oh, sure!" she retorted. "Take the easy way out! The old pigeonhole bit! Force us to close our eyes! Restrict our freedoms! That's just like you men, you know that?"

"But I'm just ask—"

"You think you know all the answers, don't you? Well, listen here, bucko, one day we're gonna rise up and put you where you belong!"

"On the silver screen?"

"No! In the gutter, with your filthy male jokes and your filthy male-dominated entertainment media that presents women as objects, and I'm damn glad I'm a woman and I would never never never want anything to do with your filthy kind! Besides, we women are destined to dominate blah blah blah," she continued, so just to

change the subject I asked:

"Well, would you go out streaking?"

"No, because I wouldn't want to give you men a cheap thrill."

"That's assuming a hell of a lot, Rainbow."

Then she started spouting off about "women's rights" and "I can make you into one of us right here and now," and I basically decided to get the hell out of there while I could still sing the bass line to "Blue Moon."

(Actually, Rainbow's real name is Laverne and that her parents were not at Woodstock. In fact, her dad's a plumber and voted for Nixon. Twice. Guess with that hanging over your head you'd want to change your name to "Rainbow" too.)

Noting that streaking might violate the campus code, I called up my buddy Charles H. Hungadunga, who's studying law and has worked with the honor court before.

"Charlie—"

"Charles," he said, correcting me.

"Uh, Charles," I said, "do you really believe that the honor court

would go after someone just for streaking; that is, if charges were pressed?"

"Absolutely. The honor code could be used in a case such as this, if enough evidence is presented."

"We're talking bare facts here, right?"

"A complainant would also have to press charges."

"The flashee, in other words?"

"Then the student attorney general would decide if a case could be built around the charges. If so, the case would go before the honor court."

"Y'know something, Charlie," I said, "I sure hope it won't result in a hung jury, because I don't think it'd be something you could cover up, and then your case load would get a little behind."

There was silence on the other end.

"Those are jokes, Charlie," I said.

"Jokes?" Charles H. Hungadunga sounded confused. "Oh, we don't allow those in the honor court."

(Hey, I didn't say they were funny jokes. If I started being funny you'd expect it every week.)

Joe Bob gets serious

When Robert Penn Warren died last week, he must have known that nobody reads his books anymore except when they're assigned in school. Nobody has time for his long perfect sentences. Nobody has time to feel or hear or see or take in that much with their senses from something as flimsy as a printed page. He was the poet laureate of the United States, the kind of hale-and-hearty larger-than-life gentleman who, a hundred years ago, would have had parades in his honor. But, in American newspapers, his obituary was smaller than the Ayatollah Khomeini's.

The problem with Robert Penn Warren is that he didn't stand for anything. And Americans can't stand that. If only he'd been like Solzhenitsyn, who stands for fierce independence, suffering for the Religion of Art. Or maybe if he'd only disappeared mysteriously, like J.D. Salinger, a genius who must be alone with his majestic mind. All these men will be praised more lavishly, just watch.

But Robert Penn Warren was concerned with something simpler: words. He wanted them to be true and clean and as close to the lying, tortured, confused soul of us all as he could get them. But nobody cared about that. What they cared about, when Warren was interviewed, was whether he had any politics. Or, to put it another way, everyone seemed to want to know what he was trying to do. It's the modern "People"-magazine disease of caring more about what you say you are than what you are, or more about what you say you want than what you have. In Warren's case,

he didn't care what people thought he was, what people thought he wanted. He cared simply about what the words were. Not what they meant.

In one of his brief forays into economics and politics, in a 1930 essay, he said the problem with black-white relations is that everyone starts from the wrong end; they have conferences to talk to one another, when what they should be doing is uniting in labor movements against the factory owners who use their fears of one another to get the cheapest wage. They don't have to talk at all. They don't even want to talk. They don't have to put on any shows. It's what they do that matters. Obviously, not a man for the sentimental post-sixties "let's make everyone feel welcome and happy" era.

But that's beside the point. The reason that Robert Penn Warren is unknown to the majority of Americans is that he dealt in a currency that's been devalued. He thought that fiction and poetry had more power than legislatures. And yet he lived to see *All the President's Men* become more famous than the original. The one the people bought more copies of was about a weak but shrewd political operative who was hounded out of office by a couple of reporters. Robert Penn Warren's version was about a generous, lustful, greedy, large-hearted, beloved, hated, poetic and ruthless Southern governor. "What was he again?" the public would say of Willie Stark. He was complete. He was human. He doesn't sell as well as the journalist's imitation.

Robert Penn Warren died in his sleep. Good. — Joe Bob Briggs

If you know what's good for you, you'll check this flick out

Next week, the greatest Eytalian drive-in movie in history, made by the greatest Eytalian director in history, based on the greatest Eytalian story in history — one of those that doesn't make a lick of sense, like all Eytalian stories — is coming out on video.

If you remember this movie from when it first came out in 1976, then you'll wanna get the complete version, uncut, in original Cinemascope, where they get the whole screen as it originally looked at the drive-in, and then run black bars at the top and bottom. This one's a limited collector's edition for anybody who wants to pony up \$89.98.

You know what I'm talking about by now, don't you?

It's here.

It's *Suspira*.

It's been 13 years, but it's still like taking a bad-acid trip through Alice in Wonderland, only instead of Alice we've got Jessica Harper drugged with "wine" that has the consistency of blood, and instead of Wonderland we've got the German dance academy run by some grody-looking old ladies who go somewhere every night at 9:30 and leave the innocent little girls in their dorm rooms to try to figure out why giant maggots are dropping out of the ceiling and messing up their hair-dos.

This movie is so weird it's impossible to describe, which is why true horror fans rank it with *Night of the Living Dead* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* as one of the scariest flicks in spatter history. It satisfies the first rule of a drive-in classic: anybody

JOE BOB BRIGGS

at the drive-in

can die at any moment. And the second rule: the innocent must suffer. And the third: the zombies must rise. And it adds a fourth: the music on the soundtrack has to be so nerve-racking that, even when nothing's happening, it's scary.

Dario Argento has made a whole slew of great slasher flicks — *The Gallery Murders*, *Four Flies on Gray Velvet*, *Inferno*, *Tenebrae* — and he just finished a new one called *Edgar Allan Poe*, but *Suspira* is the *Gone With the Wind* of Eytalian horror. (You have to see the ending to understand.)

Jessica Harper sets off for Freiburg, Germany, in a white dress, carrying a suitcase, but when she gets there, the airport is vacant, it's raining so hard you can't see two feet, no taxis will stop for her, the streets are flooding, and when she finally makes her way to the school, a girl runs out screaming, the door is bolted, and Jessica is told to go away. At this point, Jessica decides to take a hotel room and try again the next day. Uh-oh, wrong choice.

Meanwhile, the screaming bimbo is getting attacked by two giant eyes in the sky. Her head gets rammed through a glass window, then she's stabbed four or five times in the stomach, then her heart is carved out of her chest — no, it's not over yet — then she's dropped through a giant

skylight and her neck is snapped with a 50-foot-long rope. Some lady tries to help her and — whoops! — giant glass pane to the head, steel support beam through the chest.

Now, like I say, it was two giant eyes. That's it. It's an Eytalian deal. Then later on, there's a blind guy with a seeing-eye dog who's attacked by a completely invisible presence. You know, ever once in a while you see some American guy try to do this, and it's boring. They do it all over Italy, with these hard-rock rub-a-dead-chipmunk-over-an-electric-guitar musical scores, and it scares the bejabbers out of you.

That's all I'm gonna say. Like I say, it's a drug trip.

We have two breasts (and many twinkle-toed young girls cavorting in body stockings). A 97 on the Vomit Meter. Eight dead bodies. Millions of dangling maggots. One bat attack. Head scissoring. Throat slitting. Throat ripping. Flesh eating. Death in a vat of barbed wire. Multiple stabbing. Hanging. The most disgusting snoring ever put on a soundtrack. Gratuitous ballet dancing. Gratuitous German beer-all elbow-slapping weenie dancing. Wind Fu. Rain Fu. Witch Fu. Drive-in Academy Award nominations for Jessica Harper, as the dreamy-eyed drugged-up American girl who's being fattened up for the kill; Dario Argento, the master; and Joan Bennett, as the dance instructor who decided to go into witchcraft for the money.

One for the ages — *Suspira*. Four stars.

Joe Bob says check it out.