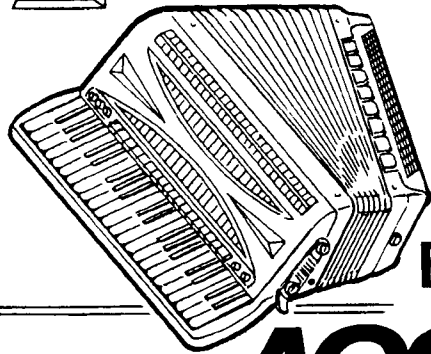


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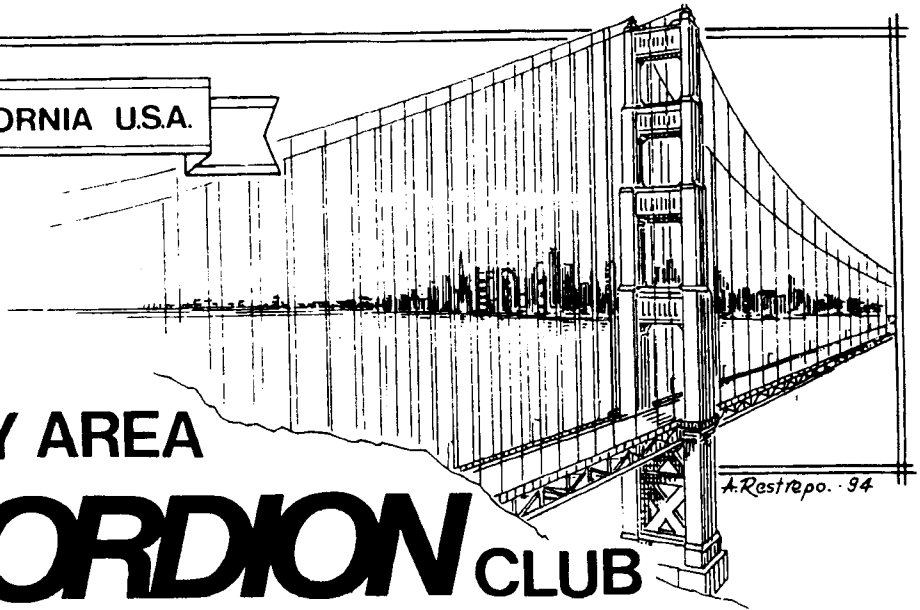
SAN FRANCISCO CALIFORNIA U.S.A.



BAY AREA

ACCORDION CLUB

July, 1999



A. Restrepo - 94

President's Message

Dear Members and Friends,

With my tenure as your President rapidly drawing to a close, I'd like to use this space to reflect a bit on our Club. I have a few thoughts, which I hope may interest you, about who we are and where we are going as a group.

This seems particularly appropriate right now, because we have a Nominating Committee hard at work to find willing new officers and board members. They will present their slate of candidates at the August meeting, and we will invite other nominations from the floor, as we always do. Then we will compile a ballot and mail it to each member.

Since our bylaws specify a two-year term of office, and since there are four officer positions and four board positions, we normally would be nominating only four people. But somehow this year many good folks have served their two-year stint and will need replacing. All four officer positions are open as well as two board positions. And so the Committee needs to find at least six willing folks - twelve would be much better - so that we could have choices during the balloting.

We are a non-profit organization, a 501C-3 according to the Feds. That means, in part, that we pay no taxes on our income so long as we are engaged in some kind of outreach. Article II of our bylaws reads: "To enhance, promote and stimulate awareness and appreciation of the accordion, its versatility and its sounds within the membership and to the general public." Promoting the accordion to the general public satisfies the 501C-3 requirements. (Incidentally, our status also allows us to provide a tax deduction for donations of either money or tangible goods.)

But we must be certain that we actually DO promote, and do it regularly and predictably. And that's not something that can be done by just a couple of members...we all need to be promoting the accordion to non-believers.

When I took office, I was focused on organizing the members so that we could predictably and relatively painlessly accomplish that goal

President's column cont. page 4

Mark Your Calendars

August 1 (Sunday). (and every first Sunday). (Note new date for San Jose meeting) BAAC San Jose meeting. Germania Rest. 261 N. 2nd. St. 3:00pm to ? Bring your accordion!

August 3 (Tuesday). BAAC General Membership Meeting at *Verdi Club in San Francisco*. 2424 Mariposa at Potrero. 7:00 - 9:30pm+. "Hot August Nights Concert". Featuring Neil Wahlgren, Ezra Gale, Alex Yaskin and special concert performance of the San Francisco Chamber Accordion Ensemble led by Joe Smiell.

August 3 (Tuesday) BAAC Board Meeting prior to club meeting at the Verdi Club. Contact Marian Kelly to confirm meeting and time.

August 7 (Saturday). Festa Italiana in Stockton. 10:00am - 11:00pm. Call 209-931-3529 for more info or Email Info@main-squeeze.com.

August 9 (Monday). (and every second Monday). *The Good Time Accordion Club*. At the Escalon Methodist Church 7:00pm. Info about joining from Jana Maas at 8001 Beckwith Rd., Modesto. \$15 membership fee includes newsletter called "Accordion News".

August 10 (Tuesday). (and every second Tuesday). Meeting of the Golden State Accordion-Aires. 7:00pm. Pietro's No.2. 679 Merchant St. Vacaville. Ca.

August 12 (Thursday) (and every second Thursday). Accordion Circle of the East Bay Music Meeting. 7:30pm, 1542 Grant St., Berkeley, in the cottage behind the main house.

August 16 (Monday). (and every third Monday). Meeting of the Accordion Club of the Redwoods. 7:00pm. Volpi's in Petaluma.

August 17 (Tuesday). (and every third Tues-

Cont. page 2

Calendar cont. from page 1

day). Accordion Circle Band in East Bay. Call 510-548-2822 for location and more info.

August 28-29. Cotati Accordion Festival.

Sept. 7 BAAC General Membership Meeting featuring **PETER SOAVE** in concert. 7:00-9:00pm. Verdi Club 2424 Mariposa St. in San Francisco. Special event price of \$10 for members.

Sept. 18. (Saturday). BAAC annual picnic at Nature Friends picnic area in Oakland. Details to follow.

BAAC Ensemble will not meet during the months of July or August. Contact Frank Montoro (650)574-4757 for additional information.

BAAC Fun Band will not meet during the months of July or August.

Beginners Support Groups/Bands
East Bay 510-843-9958
San Francisco 415-673-8835
South Bay 408-258-1258

Please send Calendar Information to your Editor, using the address on the last page.

KQED Pledge Night Cancelled
The planned KQED Pledge Night has been cancelled until further notice. A special thanks to all those who willingly put their names on the sign-up list at the last meeting.

Save This Date
Sat. Sept. 18th
BAAC Annual Picnic
at Nature Friends in Oakland Hills

The Editor received word that BAAC member O. Henry Olson passed away recently. Our condolences to Mrs. Olson.

Art Van Damme Honored

by Bob Berta

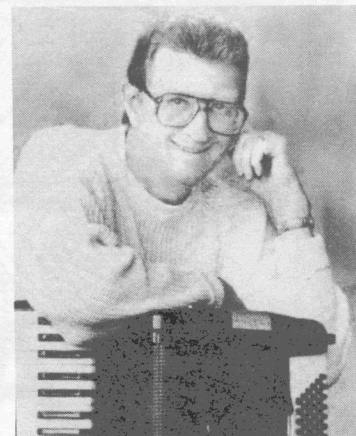
The July meeting provided the opportunity for the San Francisco Bay Area Accordion Club (BAAC) to honor one of the greatest Jazz musicians in the United States, Art Van Damme.

The program was designed to highlight the tunes Art was most famous for, to celebrate his life and to give us a chance to learn more about Art through an interview by MC for the night, Peter Di Bono.

Prior to the meeting, member Sev Garcia entertained the early birds with an exquisite collection of ten of Art's tunes. Sev spent some 3 months sequencing the parts of the tunes to recreate the actual instrumentation used by Art. Sev utilized his sequencer to play back the parts of the "backup group" and played his acoustic accordion live performing the part that Art normally would play. His selections included *Ectasy*, *Jazz Magic*, *Linger Awhile*, *Bb Blues No. 1*, *Temptation Rag*, *Farewell Blues*, *Should I*, *Bb Blues No. 2*, *Gypsy Rondo-Dark Eyes Medley* and *Meadowland*. A very special thanks to Sev for the awesome amount of work he put into this special pre-meeting concert. By the way...Sev has to drive about 6 hours each way to get to the club meeting from his home in Porterville...talk about a dedicated member!

As the meeting started Art was led down the center aisle to the loud applause of his many fans with a musical salute by Sev performing *Ectasy*. Peter Di Bono then introduced Art, his son and daughter in law and Arts' lady friend Lorraine Lowry.

A special large screen projection TV was on hand (a very special thanks to Steve Mobia for providing the video player, projection TV and giant screen) to play back a selection of video clips of various stages in Arts' career. These video clips were expertly put together into a montage through the efforts of Dick Schiller (thanks Dick for all your help in putting this event together). The video clips allowed the audience to have a first hand experience of what Arts' fans know....he is perhaps one of the greatest JAZZ musicians who ever lived....note that I didn't preface that with Accordionist! The fact



Art Van Damme



Sev Garcia



Art and Peter

that Art chose the accordion as his instrument of choice was well covered during the interview process. Art feels that there is NO instrument that can do the things that an accordion can....and is an ideal jazz instrument.



Lou Soper's Ensemble

After an extended interview which provided us with a lot of insight into a fascinating life, Art was allowed to join the audience for a special performance by some of the finest jazz musicians in our club. First up was that "Master of the Chords & Scales"....**Lou Soper** and his ensemble which includes **Bill Baillie** on Clarinet, **Al Alvakian** on Bass and **Russ Seyferth** on Drums. Lou performed some special arrangements dedicated to Art and his lady friend **Louayne**. These included *I Found a New Baby*, *Sweet Lorraine*, *Ectasy* and *Can't Help Loving that Gal of Mine*.

After a short intermission one of Peter Di Bono's students, **Graham Neumann**, was on hand to perform a very nice solo arrangement of *Gypsy Rondo*. This is the first BAAC has heard Graham perform and we are sure that performing for the man who wrote the piece is particularly nerve racking....but Graham did a great job.

Next up and closing out the evening was a special performance by an ensemble which included **Jim Hillman**, **Ron Borelli**, **Don Nurisso** and **Peter Di Bono**. They played a couple of arrangements of Art's tunes including a really over-



Jim, Don, Peter & Ron

the-top arrangement of "*You Stepped Out of a Dream*" that provided a highlight and fitting end to the nights activities.

The next two membership meetings promise to be ones that you won't want to miss. August will feature a special performance by the **Accordion Chamber Ensemble** conducted by **Joe Smiell**. This group has reached quite a high level of ability and has a pretty extensive repertoire featuring classic music and ethnic music featuring the arrangements and compositions of **Joe Smiell**. Also appearing is a popular BAAC favorite, **Alex Yaskin**. Tentatively a couple of the **BAAC Scholarship Award Winners** are also on the program.

September is our long awaited concert by **Peter Soave**. Peter is one of the greatest accordionists in the world and is certainly the best in the United States. Peter has won many championships including 4 times in Russia....I believe he is the only non-Russian to have won there. Peter career has seen him performing at world class level on piano accordion, the Russian style chromatic accordion (Bayan) and lately the Bandoneon. Peter will be performing on them all to illustrate the capabilities and nuance of each. Peter plays a wide spectrum of tunes from the Classics to Jazz to ?



Peter Soave Concert Draws 50,000+ People!

On July 17th the **THREE TENORS**, Pavarotti, Domingo, and Carreras gave a concert at Tiger Stadium in Detroit, Michigan. This was the only North American Concert scheduled for 1999. The stadium which holds 50,000 people was sold out. Peter Soave performed at the concert. Hopefully, we will be able to buy a recording of this event soon. BAAC knows that those 50,000 people came to hear the real star of the event....Peter Soave!

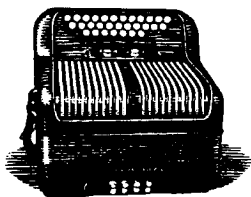
See you at the Cotati Accordion Festival Aug. 28-29

The proposed entertainment looks really exciting this year with a couple of surprise **BIG** stars. And BAAC will be there in force with our traditional booth and BAAC Jam Tent. Several accordion club members from all of the accordion clubs in the Bay Area will be taking to the stage for your entertainment.

Other members are doing workshops...Lou Soper will be doing a two day workshop that covers chord structure and scales that sounds interesting. And the Polka Tent is always a big hit with Steve Bailich's group.

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A CLUB STYLE ACCORDION

from year to year. We put some structure in place with a 10-person bylaws committee which discussed possibilities and then enacted many changes (with the members' OK), building in definitions and jobs for a Program Committee, a Membership Committee, a Finance committee and a Promotion Committee. But that plan hasn't worked as I had hoped, for lots of reasons; and your Officers and Board and I have been unable to put into place committees as envisioned; hence we/I have/has made far too little progress toward implementing accordion promotion policies. We've had a one-person Program Committee the last few months...Bob Berta. And a one-person newsletter production committee, Bob Berta. We've had a two-person Membership Committee... Dominic Palmisano with Lynn Ewing handling the mailing list—not nearly enough to welcome new members adequately or take care of the long timers! Our Treasurer, Josephine Hornbrook, is the Finance Committee. We have no Hospitality Committee. We do have a recently-active Scholarship Committee, for which we are all very grateful. Our V-P office has been vacant for months. Meantime, of course, several members have willingly and reliably handled non-committee tasks.... Ed Massolo is almost always at the meeting door; Frank Panacci is still taking care of setting up chairs and meeting refreshments. Val Kieser does anything and everything. Glenn McClelland has handled the newsletter mailing for years. We couldn't do without them!

When I ask the questions, "Who or What is BAAC? Why are we here?" I receive a wide variety of responses, seldom reflecting the statement in the bylaws, so I know that as a group we are not all in agreement. Those who are elected will inevitably provide direction toward answers to those questions.

Therefore I'm questioning the wisdom of our club goal. Are we really organized to promote the accordion, or are we a social organization? If our purpose is to promote the accordion, how do we accomplish that? I believe that's a very important question both for the incoming officers and board and for all of you. I've asked it before, and I'd like to leave it on the table.

And I'm encouraging any of you who are willing to come forward and provide direction for BAAC to do it now. Talk to the Nominating Committee if you have suggestions. To talk to one of the nominating committee members call:

Gwyn Lister	415-924-3202
Ed Massolo	650-589-8409
Dominic Palmisano	650-587-4495
Arnie Krenn	650-961-1496
Mary-Alice Eldon	650-366-7819

NOTICE: Membership renewal notices will be going out next month.

Save This Date

Sat. Sept. 18th

BAAC Annual Picnic

at Nature Friends in Oakland Hills

ACE A HIT AT LEAVENWORTH ACCORDION FESTIVAL

by Val Kieser

If you want to visit Austria or Bavaria, but without a passport or all the extra expenses, try Leavenworth, in central Washington! It is like a little Alpine village, surrounded by beautiful mountains. The town in its earlier days was a railroad (Great Northern) and sawmilling center. In the 20's the railroad had to be moved because of snowslides, and soon after that the sawmill had to be shut down. The town remained in an economic slump until the early 60's, when the Chamber of Commerce decided that they should select a theme and rebuild the town around that theme. Many themes were considered (Gay Nineties, Wild West, Scandinavian, etc.). A Bavarian/Austrian theme emerged in 1963 and, through a lot of hard work and monetary investment, the whole town was rebuilt in that style.

And what a job they did! There is music everywhere—music boxes, accordions, Glockenspiel, and even an Alphorn "concert" twice each morning at the Enzian Lodge, where some of us stayed. Specialty shops of all kinds abound, and every conceivable type of activity is available. Amateur musicians are encouraged to play on the town bandstand (I played my button box there on Saturday evening).

The town hosts 15 scheduled festivals annually, and others as they come along. The International Accordion Celebration/Folk Dance Festival takes place in June, and that's where our SF Accordion Chamber Ensemble (ACE) comes in: The Festival Committee had asked Joe Smiell (our Musical Director/Conductor/Arranger and BAAC member) to be a judge in the accordion competitions at the Festival. Through Joe, ACE (members: Aldo Argenti, Jr., Mary-Alice Eldon, Lynn Ewing, Ron Harris, Valerie Kieser, Nora Mazzara, Frank Montoro, Valarie Morris, Bob Smith and Sharon Walters—all BAAC members) was invited to give a one-hour concert at the Festival on Friday night, June 18.

The concert that we gave was our best ever. The feedback that each of us has received has been phenomenal. There were around 400 people in the audience. Every extra chair was brought in to accommodate the crowd.

We worked very hard on this program and had an excellent dress rehearsal that same morning, in the same hall, so we could get used to the acoustics. From what people told us, few there had ever heard of a classical accordion orchestra, playing real classical music, much less listened to one. They were surely surprised!

So, we are proud and encouraged, and Joe was pleased. And yes, we loved Leavenworth, and John and I hope to go back there again, whether with ACE or just for a great vacation!

Fontana Button Box Festival 1999

by Val Kieser


This year was the fourth time I've attended the annual Memorial Weekend Far West Button Box Jamboree, sponsored by the Fontana Slovene Button Accordion Club. What a party it is! Things seem to start out rather calm the first night, then each day the party gets wilder, until the last night (Sunday) it is going at fever pitch. However, not being a late nighter myself, I left on the early side each night. Others stayed until the very end each night and then went to the all-night restaurant for more partying!

There is continuous entertainment and dancing both indoors and outdoors all day long every day, beginning at noon and going on until midnight. Various groups sign up to play for a half-hour at a time. Included this year were the **Alpine Echoes of the South Bay** and the **Eurotones of the North Bay**, **Steve Balich Band**, **The Golden State Accordion Club Band** (Vacaville) and many other great groups.

On Sunday the formal concert and the contest took place. The National Anthem was sung by Kay Newburg, member of the Eurotones and the accordion Club of the Redwoods, and a good friend of BAAC. The highlight for me was our Button-Box ensemble from Joe Smiell's Button-Box camp of last year. We played a very famous Mozart Menuetto in four parts and we brought the house down! The people were blown away by the sound of the button box playing classical music in ensemble! In addition to the Mozart, we played a German march, called *Der Frohliche Bauer*, which also came off very well. We had all worked on our parts since last summer, so Joe was able to pull us all together in just two rehearsals at our motel, and I must say, we and he did a great job!

After our performance, Joe received a very moving and beautiful tribute from Frank Vidergar, the head of the Festival.

Next year I will qualify for the Senior Division in the contest, so I'm thinking about entering. We'll See!

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Notes on the Evolution of the Keyboard

by Boaz Rubin

The history of the accordion is somewhat muddled and I haven't waded in it extensively. But I learn something from every vintage instrument that comes my way for repairs or for sale, and reports of the invention of the piano accordion occasionally reach me. I have heard that it was invented in San Francisco - and that it was invented in Germany.

A likely place of origin is Italy. The earliest reliable reference to a piano accordion that I have come across is of a Dallape built in Italy in the mid 1890s. The early piano accordions were small wooden boxes, often inlaid with various designs. Although larger than most diatonic button accordions, these early piano models were much smaller than their modern counterparts. The keys were short and narrow and the keyboard was no longer than the main cabinet of the accordion.

All that changed in the early 1900s when San Francisco accordion builder Colombo Piatanesi of Colombo & Sons, popularly known as Colombo Accordions, along with the famous accordionist Pietro Deiro, developed the modern extended keyboard. The extended keyboard was longer than the cabinet and had 41 keys, the same number that is standard for a full sized accordion today.

Colombo Piatanesi was the grandfather of Gordon Piatanesi, who grew up to become a master accordion builder himself. Recently retired, Gordon is well known in the business, and the person who trained me. He played a part in the formation of some of our local accordion clubs and put in a rare appearance at a BAAC meeting just recently. But getting back to Grandpa Colombo and his contributions to the development of the world's favorite instrument...

In 1907 Colombo Piatanesi and his partner, Pasquali Petromilli, emigrated from Castelfidardo to the US to shop for an accordion business. They wound up in San Francisco where they purchased the Guerrini Accordion Company, after first checking out other options across the country. Piatanesi was soon to start his own business, Colombo & Sons, in addition to remaining half-owner of Guerrini. It was during this period that Colombo Piatanesi and Pietro Deiro created their prototype new keyboard, and in this way Piatanesi played an important and lasting role in the evolution of the piano accordion.

The next important development in keyboard design was the tone chamber. While the tone chamber (not present in every accordion) is part of the soundboard, not the keyboard, it requires that the keys be designed to end in two valves set at a ninety-degree angle to each other, that these valves open and close simultaneously, and that both valves remain airtight when closed. The earliest example of a tone chamber accordion that

I have seen appears to be from around the mid 1930s. The builders of this accordion solved the problem of providing for two valves per key by building two aluminum keys, each with its own valve, terminating both aluminum keys in a single wooden key which is finished off in plastic. This plastic key is the key that the player actually depresses. This method of building seems to have been abandoned within a few years for a single key which is either split or added on to in order to provide for the second valve. Interestingly enough, while the early tone chamber accordion I worked on carries no name plate, it is built much like a Dallape. It is possible that Dallape invented both the piano keyboard and the tone chamber.

Beginning in the mid to late 1930s, key geometry begins to change. By changing the point at which the key rotates on the axle, makers began to engineer a shallower action, reducing the distance the player needs to depress the keys in order to lift the valves high enough for a bright, full sound. This change accelerated after World War II, with keyboard action becoming steadily shallower. Even in the last 20 years the trend has continued, with shallower action in the best accordions allowing for faster playing.

Buyers' tip: My most emphatic advice to a beginning accordionist looking for an instrument is to find the least expensive accordion that will serve. It is not hard to find a decent used accordion for \$500 or less, or a basic new beginner's model for under \$1,000. It is almost never wise to spend much more than this on an accordion until you have been playing for a year or so. Wait until you get to know more about the instrument and how you want to play it. You can always trade up later. (Ask your dealer about trade-in terms when you buy.)

Even if you are an experienced musician on an instrument other than accordion - even if you are a keyboard player - you should heed this advice. The experienced musician just getting acquainted with accordion is the one most likely to be overconfident in his or her ability to make a prudent purchase - and therefore more likely to make a bad bargain! Knowing which is the right accordion for you, and learning to recognize a good accordion at a good price, takes experience. When the time comes, the advice of a trusted teacher or accordion playing friend can be invaluable.

Accordion answer man Boaz Rubin is a professional repairman based in Oakland. Send your accordion-care questions to Boaz care of this newsletter or e-mail Boaz at: schmatte@well.com.

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Member Needs Some REAL Accordion Music

The Newsletter received a card from member Jim Van Nostrand. Jim moved to Jackson Hole, Wyoming. He remarked that he has been enjoying the Newsletter's technique articles but laments the lack of any jazz accordion practitioners at his new home. He says that everyone plays only the oompah-oompah school of music. He misses the Ernie Felice, T. Gumina jazz accordion style of playing. Too bad he missed our Art Van Damme tribute! He is so depressed he is thinking about going back to piano....sheesh....talk about hitting the pits of depression! If some of you jazz afficiandos want to talk Jim out of doing something drastic I am sure he would appreciate some kind words. You can write to him at P.O. Box 1121, Jackson Hole, Wyoming. 83001.

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The Accordion goes to the Movies

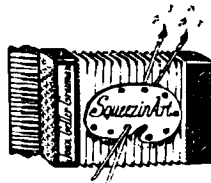
by Peter Di Bono

The Marin Symphony Orchestra presented the "Music Of The Movies" on May 16, and 18. These concerts featured the original musical scores from some of the greatest film scores ever. *Gone With the Wind*, *2001 A Space Odyssey*, *Shine*, *Casablanca*, *Psycho*, *Star Wars*, and *Schindler's List* were just some of the shows highlighted.

I played the accordion solo from the movie *The Blue Angels*, in which Marlene Dietrich did the vocal. This piece was replete with dancers from the Michael Smuin Ballet/San Francisco Ballet, and vocalist Meg McKay.

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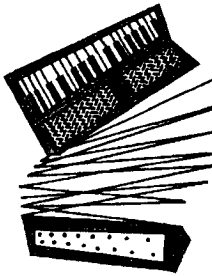
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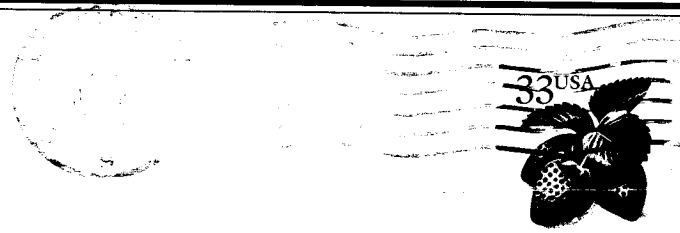
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