Los Angeles Times
VIEW
PART IV
THURSDAY, JULY 12, 1979

JACK SMITH

Falling Afoul of Fallibility

For the past several days I have had a demoralizing sensation that things were falling on me, and I don't mean Skylab.

I refer to a series of strange errors that have turned up in this column, as inexplicable and spooky as if they indeed had come from outer space.

I don't like to waste the reader's time and try his patience by correcting errors ad infinitum, but except for one or two trivial transgressions from which I can easily exonerate myself, the errors have not been mine. They have been arbitrary, mischievous and exasperating, and if I were not so familiar with the labyrinthine and fallible system by which a sentence finds its way into print in a large daily newspaper, I would suspect sabotage.

First, when I wrote about one of the perils of summer being the slides or home movies one is compelled to see by friends who have come back from vacations with suitcases full of them, the word *perils* came out *periods*, thus turning that sentence, which was the first in that column, into gibberish, and ruining my day.

Then, in writing about those we might like Skylab to fall near to, just to give them a scare, I recalled that Ko-Ko, the Mikado's Lord High Executioner, had a notorious little list of people who never would be missed.

To my utter astonishment, *executioner* came out *commissioner*. How this abominable illiteracy was perpetrated under my name I do not know and probably never will find out. But since I am a lifelong Gilbert and Sullivan fan, though by no means an expert, my embarrassment has been excruciating.

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Rather than impose this explanation on those to whom it is of no consequence, I would have individually answered each of those who wrote to chide me, but there were so many that I have no choice, short of form letters, which I have never used and never will, but to go public with it.

Some of my critics, however, went too far, as critics often do. John Howland of Laguna, for example, after pointing out that *commissioner* not only was wrong but wouldn't fit the music, went on to say that "nowhere in Ko-Ko's scintillating lines is the word *people* used: It's just: 'I've got 'em on the list—and they'll none of 'em be missed. They'll none of 'em be missed.' "

Howland had me on the ropes, but like an overeager prizefighter, sensing the kill, he hurried his next shot and left himself wide open. Nowhere in Ko-Ko's scintillating lines is the word *people* used? Dear me. What about "people who have flabby hands and irritating laughs"? and "people who eat peppermint and puff it in your face"? not to mention *children* and *ladies* and *idiots* and *persons*, all of whom are people, too.

Yet another maddening error, perhaps the worst of all, was that insidious bugaboo of honest prose, the dropped *not*. Thus, what appears in print is exactly the opposite of what one meant to say. Against this catastrophe the writer is helpless, and his protests of innocence fail to restore his credibility.

This lapse was especially defeating since it occurred in a statement by which I hoped to clear up a previous ambiguity over that eloquent piece of body language, the Lana Turner flex. The Turner flex as I knew it, I was trying to say, was *not* executed by the Turner front but by the Turner rear. Alas, the *not* was dropped, leaving me and Miss Turner exactly where we started. I can't speak for Miss Turner, but I am putting this whole thing behind me.

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Two lesser matters, neither of which I can blame on spooks:

1. Noting the proliferation of the phrase "and more" in advertising, I said it was usually tacked on after a string of adjectives, as in "rubber tires, electric lights, real vinyl upholstery, air conditioning and more," or "sex, violence, humor, pathos, drama and more."

Don Miller, of the Episcopal Church of Our Saviour in San Gabriel, was one of several who corrected me: "If those two strings were made up of adjectives," he wrote, "then I'm a monkey's unclerical. I'm convinced that you slip in the rare gaffe so that we fans can love you the more for your fallibility."

I guess he means that only a monkey's unclerical could love me for infallibility.

2. In writing of Skylab, I observed that since the earth's surface was four-fifths ocean, the odds were 5 to 1 against Skylab's falling on land.

"If four-fifths of the world is water," wrote Jim Gavin, among others, "the chances are one in five that Skylab will land in water. The *odds*, however (that it won't fall on land), are *four* to one."

I can't blame that one on the system. Neither was it carelessness on my part. My odds were based on personal experience, not mathematics. I have found, in life, that when my chances are one in five, the odds against me are 5 to 1.

It's just a little handicap I've always had.

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SEASON OPENER AT THE BOWL

More than 10,000 persons turned out Tuesday night for the first concert of the 58th summer season at the Hollywood Bowl. The audience for the performance by the Los Angeles Philharmonic included Danny Kaye and Olive Behrendt, right. Performing, above, were pianist Misha Dichter and conductor Kiril Kondrashin. See stories by Jody Jacobs, Page 2, and Daniel Cariaga, Page 22.

Times photos by Tony Barnard



Begelman: 'I Was Trying to Destroy Myself'

BY CHARLES SCHREGER
Times Staff Writer

"There's no excuse for what I did. There is no justification . . . I was trying to defeat myself. I was trying to injure myself. In the very truest sense, I was attempting to destroy myself."

David Begelman nearly succeeded on all three counts.



SELF-SCRUTINY—David Begelman explains how he fell from power.
Times photo by Sandy Felsenthal

Eighteen months after resigning in disgrace from one of the most powerful positions in show business, the dual presidency of Columbia Pictures' feature film and television divisions, and only two weeks after being taken off probation for forging $40,000 in studio checks, Begelman appeared anything but defeated, injured and destroyed.

He looked like what he is—true, no longer a studio president, but a 57-year-old independent film producer of stature and clout.

Now under contract to the same company he defrauded in a succession of what today he calls "highly neurotic acts," Begelman, finally, had agreed to explain and put into perspective what happened, to reflect on the drama and scandal of the past two years.

Begelman pleaded no contest on May 17, 1978, to grand theft charges stemming from the forgeries. He was later fined $5,000 and placed on three years' probation after the courts accepted his offer to produce a public service film on the dangers of "angel dust."

Symbol of Hollywood Corruption

He has been the center of controversy, a symbol for suggested corruption in Hollywood, since it first came to light that he defrauded the company he headed.

"Clearly, there were forces at work within me that I was not consciously aware of," he said Tuesday, trying to describe realizations he has come to during his 21 months of psychotherapy. As the conversation indicated, he has been deeply touched by therapy.

Begelman looked successful, not defeated, sitting in his office, which is a bit more compact than the one he occupied when he ran Columbia. The present office is located in the corner on the second floor of the new Columbia administration building at the Burbank Studios.

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POLITICAL GROUP MEETS IN CINCINNATI

Women's Caucus: A Shift in Emphasis

BY MARLENE CIMONS
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—On the threshold of a presidential campaign year, an estimated 2,000 women are expected to gather Friday in Cincinnati for the fourth biennial convention of the National Women's Political Caucus, a meeting almost certain to deal heavily with their involvement in the 1980 elections.

"The caucus has come from a highly dedicated, tumultuous group into a well-organized and sophisticated political organization in which you will find the most politically attuned women in the United States," said Mildred Jeffrey, its national chair.

Focus on 1980

"I see this convention as having a very clear focus on 1980, both on the presidential election and the congressional races," she said. "A great emphasis is going to be given to delegate selection for the national nominating conventions—in electing delegates, supporting 'favorite daughters,' and in developing the platforms. And we expect the candidates to court us—to come to us—women—just like they go to labor, veterans, civil rights groups and farmers."

Caucus officials said that of the potential presidential hopefuls—both announced and unannounced candidates for nomination—former Republican California Gov. Ronald Reagan and former GOP Congressman and CIA Director George Bush have requested space at the convention to set up booths, and Democratic Sen. Birch Bayh's office will run a hospitality suite.





PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDERS—Running for chairperson of National Women's Political Caucus are incumbent Mildred Jeffrey, left, and Iris Mitgang.
AP Laserphoto
Photo by Christopher Springmann

At the moment, none of the candidates is scheduled to appear. President Carter, who was invited to address the convention, declined due to a scheduling conflict, caucus officials said.

"On a scale of zero to 10, he (Carter) would be about three right now," Jeffrey said. "He has appointed more women than ever before, but he's also done many things to lead us to believe his heart just isn't in it. The White House just hasn't used its power to implement his promises. Firing Bella Abzug from his national advisory committee, for example—that was a tragic mistake. I think the memory remains strong. It's something women won't forget easily or quickly. Oh, well. He's got another year. Maybe he can recoup, but he'll have to work very hard."

Protested Abzug Firing

Jeffrey, a former member of the President's Advisory Committee for Women, was one of those who resigned in protest of the Abzug dismissal.

Confirmed speakers for the convention include Patricia Roberts Harris, secretary of housing and urban development; Rep. Elizabeth Holtzman (D-N.Y.); Norma Paulus, Oregon Republican secretary of state; State Sen. Polly Bacca-Barragan (D-Colo.); Gloria Steinem, editor of Ms. magazine; former New York Democratic Rep. Bella Abzug, now cochair of Women USA, and Associate Judge Rita C. Davidson of the Maryland Court of Appeals.

The caucus also will elect its national officers and amend its bylaws. Jeffrey is

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The Eyes of Texas Are on 'Dallas'

BY HOWARD ROSENBERG
Times Staff Writer

DALLAS—The eyes of Texas are upon Southfork Ranch, 164 flat-as-a-tabletop acres northeast of the town of Plano.

Set back a distance from the road is an extravagantly large white frame house, and out back under a sizzling sun that burns like a branding iron the camera is in place and director Irving Moore has asked for silence. Listen . . .

Bobby: "Is anything wrong?"
Pam: "No."
Bobby: "Well . . . is anything right?"
Pam: ". . . I suppose so."
Bobby: "Pamela, are you pregnant?"
Pam: "Yes."
Bobby: "Oh, my God!"

It's a wrap on a scene from that bouquet of banality, that creme de la crumminess, that triumph of titillating trash known to discriminating TV viewers as "Dallas," a hit series about the appalling oil-rich Ewing clan. The pregnancy crisis stems from the frightening genetic disease that Pam's father, Digger Barnes, passes on to other generations.

Hooked on It

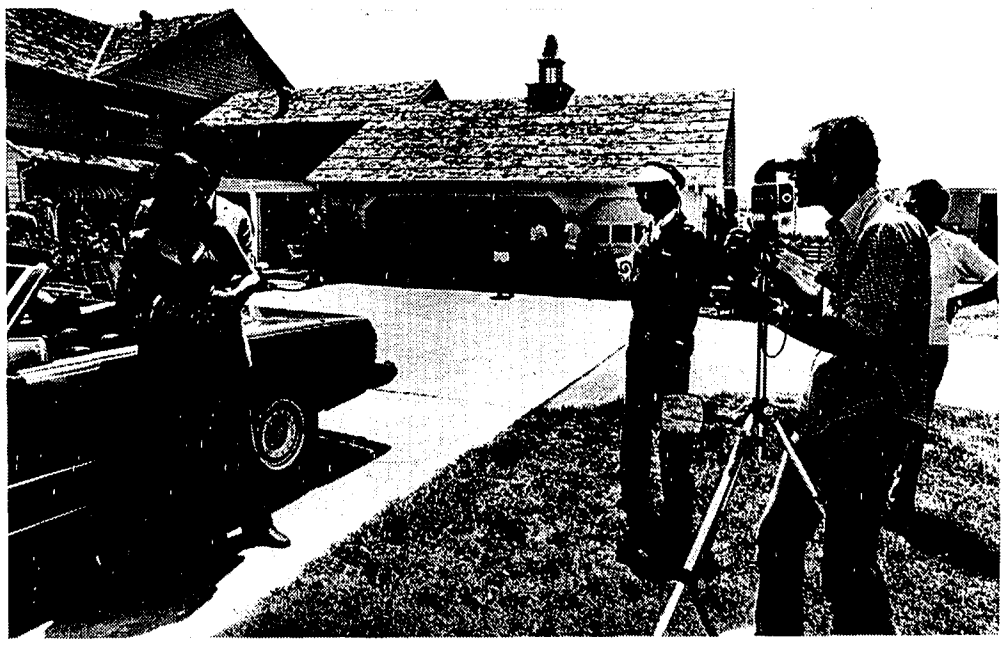
"Sometimes," confesses handsome Patrick Duffy, the former "Man From Atlantis" who is trauma-prone as angelic Bobby, "it's hard to keep a straight face."

"Oh, I know it's nothing but trash," drawls straight-shooting, curse-it-like-it-is Jim Davis, who plays family patriarch Jock Ewing, "but it's amazing the people who are hooked on this."

Always the bankbook realist is Larry Hagman, actor behind evil-doing J.R. Ewing, recognizing "Dallas" for what it is.

"A windfall!"

"Dallas" is in Dallas, five weeks of shooting exterior scenes for eight episodes with full cast and crew before returning to MGM in Los Angeles to shoot the matching interior pieces. The location work focuses on the lush spread owned—and renamed Southfork for the series—by builder-developer Joe R. (that's right, another J.R.) Duncan and his wife, Natalie, who raise thoroughbreds that whinny loudest when actors are speaking their lines.



TORRID TEXANS—"Dallas" stars Patrick Duffy and Victoria Principal pose for publicity pictures on location outside Dallas, where the hit CBS series about a rich family has received a mixed reception.

This is the show's second return to Dallas, its original production site. A scout for Lorimar Productions had spotted the Duncan place, which is about 20 miles from Dallas, and asked to lease it for the series.

"When they told us what they wanted to do, I thought it was hilarious and I started laughing," says Mrs. Duncan, a bubbly, joking woman who roams her house brandishing a fly swatterlike club, prompting Hagman to dub her "the wicked witch of the West."

She raises the fly swatter. "Don't you dare print that!"

After envisioning the excitement a TV series would bring to their lives, the Duncans welcomed "Dallas" onto their property. "But the actors were so normal it was terrible," said Mrs. Duncan. "There wasn't a weirdo amongst 'em.' "

Escape From the Heat

Nonetheless, "Dallas" has wrought changes in Duncanland. The crew is operating out of the garage and Mrs. Duncan has taken pity on the cast and allowed them to escape from the intense heat into the air-conditioned refreshment of a massive playroom dominated by the mounted stuffed head of her son's champion bull.

As for excitement, Southfork had its very own "High Noon," a tense and very loud lunch-line beef involving a leather-tough wrangler handling the show's horses and stock and a brash young assistant director. In a scene that could have been excerpted from a B movie, the wrangler slapped the curly-permed assistant director on the face and ordered him "outa town by tomorrow," and only a last-minute patch-up kept Curly from shoving off the next morning for Los Angeles.

Also thank to "Dallas," the Duncan ranch now tops the locals' list of places to hang out. More than 600 have applied to work as extras without pay, sightseers don't let up and Mrs. Duncan, her fly swatter thrashing the air, angrily speaks of those nervies who peep through her windows.

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