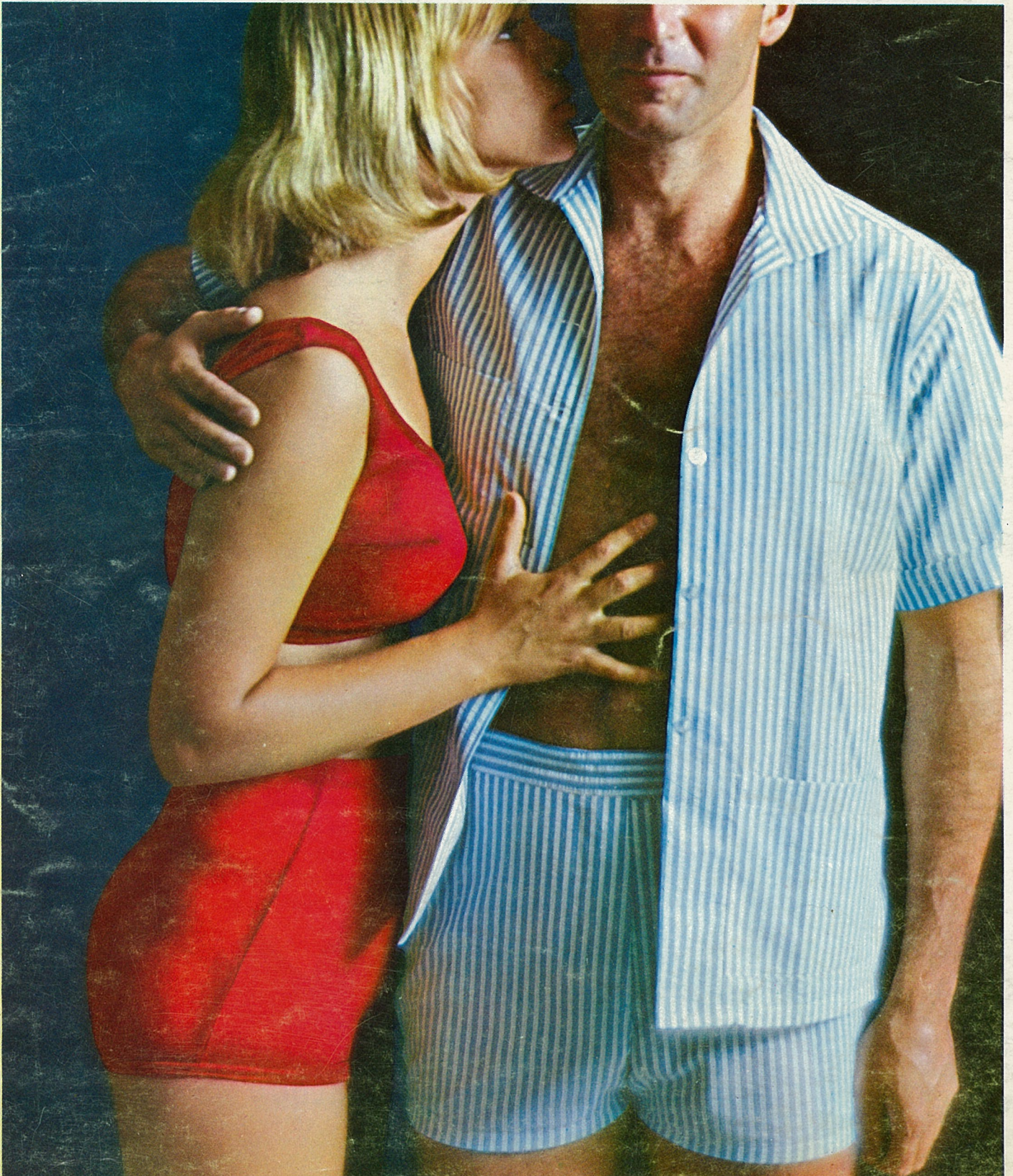


# NUGGET

FEARLESS FEMMES SHOW TEN WAYS TO DO IT (SELL THE CLASSICS)

ALSO: ELIA KAZAN, DIZZY GILLESPIE, JACK GELBER, PIETRO DI DONATO





# THE MAN'S WORLD

We come, with mixed feelings, to the case of Lenny Bruce. You probably have an opinion — who doesn't? — but sit still long enough to hear ours. First, so that no matter how finky you finally think our stand is, let it be triple-clear that we don't think Bruce should go to jail for *any* reason. As you know, he is facing possible prison terms for both "obscenity" (in Chicago) and the possession of narcotics (on the Coast). The obscenity rap is questionable in every sense, bringing into play as it does unsettled ideas of taste, propriety, freedom of expression, just how far an artist or performer is entitled to go. These questions are decidedly up in the air all over the country and to make Bruce the martyr for all the dirty mouths around is silly and unjust, even if at times he seems to desire a niche in history as a Copacabana Jesus. Enlightened public opinion can only come to his surly defense whether he wants it or not.

As far as the narcotics charge goes, everyone knowledgeable in this area knows that our laws stink pretty badly. A small army of psychiatrists, lawyers, general MDs and reporters will tell you how indisputably barbaric it is to call addiction a crime in 1963. A user has all the free choice of a terrified passenger in a careening New York taxi; it's out of his control and to be punished for that is just about as stupidly vindictive as society can get. Once again enlightened public opinion has no alternative but to stand by Bruce (whether he is a user or not isn't the real point) and agitate even harder for some humane legislation in this disgraceful back-alley of American life.

But the phenomenon of Mr. Bruce, as you know, goes much deeper than his brushes with the law. His admirers — and they include two of our most outspoken jazz critics, Ralph J. Gleason and Nat Hentoff, as well as some of the most perceptive newspapermen and social critics strung across the country — see Bruce as a fearless black knight who is lancing the pustules of our age. They use the word "genius" in speaking of him and there is no self-consciousness when they do so. This is especially true of nightclub and entertainment writers, men who cover this beat and can truly appreciate how radically Bruce has changed the entire criterion of after-dark entertainment in the last six years —

changed it from forced frivolity to the most ferocious kind of humor that claws into the blisters of sex, race, religion, hypocrisy, etc. In their eyes Bruce could no longer be thought of as the conventional comic dear to burlesque, radio, TV, nor even as an extension of the nicely clever Mort Sahl. He became (we are told) a king-sized social prophet trying to awaken a sick, numbed populace from its disgusting moral coma.

O.K. We dug the sloth out of our ears and listened closely to every word in Bruce's five taped-on-the-spot albums. We caught him at the Vanguard in Manhattan and got our friends to send us long reports on his appearances in courts and clubs all over the country. Revolutionary individuals are the lifeblood of the arts and society, ultimately, and Nugget is acutely sensitive to their presence because—frankly—we want to learn from them and incorporate their message into our pages.

And Bruce comes out about 50-50, no more and no less, on our tally sheet.

Here's why. Although an original satirist and a brilliant mimic — a man who can zip through a dozen convincing roles in an 8-minute bit — we found a monotonous sameness to his narrow choice of material. The world, yours and ours, is not made up *only* of junkies, Hollywood, other comics, minority groups, sexual aberrations, four-letter words and the like. As good paid-up hipsters, we nevertheless found ourselves getting bored by the shrunk horizons that enclose Bruce's world and getting angry when he tried to act as if this was *everyone's* world. It just pure ain't and it's surprisingly provincial of Bruce to think it is. It's as if someone suffering from nightclub pallor tried to pretend that sunshine was either square or didn't exist — a cunning distortion of reality.

We admired Bruce's deft roasting of obnoxious types (once again his expert and loving mimicry is invaluable) but found his neo-Christian moralisms naive and prententious, redeemed only by his apparent sincerity. But can actual ignorance be excused by conviction? When Bruce came out with the cheaply sentimental nugget that "Jimmy Hoffa is more of a Christian than Christ because he hires ex-convicts" we thought he was kidding—this shallow half-truth was profundity? But he wasn't kidding, Bruce the Jazz Circuit Hegel truly believes this



GELBER (p. 46)



GILLESPIE (p. 8)



PROPPER (p. 10)



DI DONATO (p. 25)



# WHEN WILLY K. VANDERBILT FROlickED AND I SHOVELED HIS SNOW

a report on the '30s

BY PIETRO  
DI DONATO

**D**uring the Depression I lived on a Long Island hillside that overlooked Northport harbor and William K. Vanderbilt's baronial estate, "Eagle's Nest," in Centerport. Anchored in the harbor was Willy's gleaming white yacht the ALVA, as big as an ocean liner, and on the shore was the hangar for his world-spanning flying boat and smaller planes.

The Depression was a renaissance for the unemployed. Being on Home Relief you could sleep late, loll, read books, and seriously devote yourself to sex; sex as the topic, the art, the *raison d'être* of life. Sex was the entertaining safety valve that saw America through the Depression's superfluity of time and obviated social disorder. Some ill winds blew good, some liabilities became assets. The memorable snowstorm of the early '30s was a boon; it gave us Home-Reliefers shovels, 50¢ an hour, and a cozy berth for me on Willy K.'s estate. Digging out Willy's snow-packed private roads I was befriended by one of his host of caretakers, Nelson, whose hobbies were his trumpet and the servant girls. Nelson conjured work for me, some masonry, gardening, and odd jobs.

I'll never forget the head chef sending one of the chauffeurs and the Rolls Royce all the way into Willy's Park Avenue home for a box of iodized salt, nor peering into the window of the music room and seeking a drunken nude woman at the piano playing and singing the *Ave Maria*.

I had never met a rich man before, and beholding a real multi-millionaire in the flesh, Willy K. Vanderbilt, was like seeing God. Puttering around Eagle's Nest I came within touching distance of the rich. Money has a chemical effect upon the human system. A tremendous bank account can create a physiological metamorphosis. The Aladdin's lamp of immense wealth makes for elegantly shaped

torso and limbs, close-fitting ears, equine faces, skin of living porcelain, gem-clear eyes that do not mirror immorality, and a stance that needs not soul. The unharassed young are confident as the stars and have an air of maturity, and the old have an agelessly young semblance.

The help, living the life of lords on Willy's bounty, gossiped gleefully about him and the other Vanderbilts: that he seduced Rosamund Warburton from her husband, kept a French mistress named Nellie on Riverside Drive near Grant's tomb, she and Willy entertaining the President there, Rosamund's alcoholism, how Willy played Jekyll and Hyde under aliases and went slumming in the lower depths. At the time I thought it was shameful for servants to scandalize and bite the hand that fed them.

It was no secret that Willy K., then 60ish, was a swordsman of Aphrodite, a fabulously rich Don Juan who lunged at every passing skirt regardless of race, color or creed. The provincials referred to his estate not as Eagle's Nest but the Wolf's Lair.

One summer's day I swam with a young Northport rake named Gordon Bushell to the ALVA, sneaked up the ship's ladder and saw his lusty old nibs dallying with an exquisite high-yellow girl in an enviable but unmentionable position. I should have had a camera with me.

Willy K. and I had something in common: Girls whose people were on Home Relief and smelled of kerosene lamp smoke in bed. A kerosene-smelling clam-digger's daughter working in the kitchen of the estate went to bed with Willy by day, and by night with me.

Willy K., well past three score and 10, had to forfeit his earthly consolation in January, 1944, leaving behind \$40 million and proving that all men are not born equal. But, if the Good Book de-

ceive us not, Willy K. has been trying to shove a camel through a needle's eye since.

In many cases death is a blessed escape for the hard-up who live in hopes and die in despair, but death for a millionaire is a Greek tragedy, an irrevocable farewell to *la dolce vita*, lovely orgies, myriad pleasures, ego, power, divine foods and drinks, servants, cute deviations, multiple lives and gorgeous young girls, a veritable paradise lost.

It would be a classic of justice if the poor had never been born and the rich never had to die. But I did not make the world.

The Guaranty Trust Company of New York was the Executor of the Last Will and Testament of William K. Vanderbilt, Deceased.

The will was dreary reading: Legacy of income for life and \$2 million for this female relative, and two for that one, and so on.

The final accounting of the vast holdings did not materialize for judicial settlement and distribution until 1955, with interest accrued.

Onto the stage of the Surrogate's court studded with posh legatees such as Phelps, Paine, Warburton, Gaynor, Pratt and Hutton, comes an elderly, little, gray-haired, bespectacled, quietly dressed woman of Jewish background, to softly claim one third of the \$40 million. She comes into the proceedings like a character from a Pirandello play, with her petition:

"To set aside the Final accounting of the Will of the Late

William K. Vanderbilt, Deceased.

This petition of the undersigned Dora Blowers respectfully states:

That I was married to William K. Vanderbilt under the alias of Arthur Blowers on December 30th, 1925 by the Clerk of the Court in Stamford, Connecticut.

That as a result of this marriage, three

children were born to us, a son in September, 1926, named William Harris Blowers, a son in October, 1927, named Reginald Philip Blowers and a daughter in July, 1933 named Alva Esther Blowers.

That I am the widow of the deceased William K. Vanderbilt.

That in September, 1927, my husband revealed his identity to me as William K. Vanderbilt and stated he divorced his first wife, Virginia Graham Vanderbilt, to make good his marriage to me. That he was forced into his marriage to Rosamund Lancaster Warburton for "social misdemeanor." That William K. Vanderbilt never legally adopted the two Warburton children, Barclay and Rosemary Warburton. That William K. Vanderbilt made a settlement of \$2 million by a secret divorce from Rosamund Lancaster Warburton in 1932, and in 1933, asked for Catholic *demarches* from the Pope. That she was his wife in name only.

That mysterious fires with the love letters my husband William K. Vanderbilt sent to me and the fire with the furniture he bought for me and the disappearance of important papers, change of records and substitutions through the years pertaining to this claim, bear out my contention that many unusual occurrences to hide my husband's identity took place through the years.

That I never sought publicity having personally contacted Mr. Crocker of the Guaranty Trust Company in October 1947 and again by letter on June 1952 pleading for consideration of the legal rights of my children and me to avoid Court expenses and notoriety.

Wherefore, your Petitioner prays that an Order be granted directing the Will and Probate Proceedings of the late William K. Vanderbilt be set aside and a postponement be granted for the final audit of accounts of the late William K. Vanderbilt by the Guaranty Trust Company of New York, in order to give your Petitioner time to further her claim to the moneys due her from the estate of William K. Vanderbilt.

Dora Blowers."

Adding theatrical cast to the ensuing *Right You Are, If You Think You Are* drama was the Surrogate, Edgar F. Hazleton, former Supreme Court judge, District Attorney, and defense lawyer for the corset salesman Judd Gray, and sash-weight murderess Ruth Snyder— ("Good God, Pietro, I had a deal to snatch Ruth from the chair but the lousy D.A. double-crossed me!" "Ah, the past is a bucket of ashes, the sun gone down, a chamberpot out the window!" Years ago David Belasco used to go to court to enjoy the histrionics of the young criminal lawyer Hazleton, and offered him a fat stage contract.)

Gasser and Hayes Esquires, very proper patrician legal gentlemen representing the respondent, seemed rather set against handing over \$13 million to

Dora 'Vanderbilt' Blowers and Willy K.'s possible three children, notwithstanding the casual coincidence that somehow or other William, Reginald and Alva Blowers happened to be the living images of Willy K. At first they suggested that Dora Blowers was not of sound mind. That could not hold water; Dora Blowers was a federal government employee and if the court accepted Gasser and Hayes' version of her it would have meant that it pleased the FBI, the Treasury and the Air Force to keep crazy people in their ranks.

It behooved the Vanderbilt Estate to come up with an Arthur Blowers in the quick. They found four Arthur Blowers. The most suitable for their purposes was an *Of Mice and Men* one in Ticonderoga, New York, a superannuated loner, floater and boozier who had been the periodic guest of various Veterans' mental hospitals, otherwise a willing and accommodating chap. His testimony was a hobo's odyssey. Woodenly he said he had been the husband of the gray-haired Dora Blowers present in the Surrogate's chamber. Was he the father of her three children? Well, he supposed so—he could have been—of course he did not know the names of his children. He bummed about the country here and there, and when East shackled up with Dora Blowers once in a while.

(Now the spotlight is on the character called Dora Blowers.)

Q. Mrs. Blowers, you realize you are under oath now. A. Yes.

Q. You must tell the truth. A. I always do.

Q. And that if there is a falsehood, you will be subject to the penalties of the law. A. Right. Q. What is your occupation?

A. I am a clerk-typist with the government for over 11 years, at present the finance contract desk of the Newark Airport Procurement District, a branch of the Air Force. I do secretarial, statistical and auditing work. I was with the Department of Justice from February, 1942, and in 1944 when my husband William K. Vanderbilt died, I asked for and was given permission to be transferred to the office of Dependents' Benefits, a branch of the Treasury Department in Newark. (Before that she had been a memory teacher, taught handicapped children, and had been a teacher with the Central Commercial High School at 214 East 42nd Street, New York City.)

Q. You saw the witness take the stand who testified he lived in Ticonderoga? A. Yes. Q. And said he was Arthur Blowers and the Arthur Blowers who married you under that name. Is he?

A. No — definitely *no!* Q. You don't need to call out loudly in a dramatic manner; just say so. Have you ever seen him before? A. I met him in 1953 in the office of a Mr. Viscardi, when Senator Morritt, then my attorney, told me there was an 'Arthur Blowers' living in Ticonderoga. Mr. Viscardi called in this Mr. Blowers that is here now and asked him 15 intimate questions relating to our courtship and marriage, but he wasn't able to answer. How could he? There was no recognition — neither this 'Mr. Blowers' knew me nor did I know him. Q. When and where did you meet your Arthur Blowers? A. I was employed as the teacher for children at Camp Arcady on Lake George. In the evenings I went down to the camp entertainments at the foot of the lake and there met my husband — then my sweetheart. He took pictures of me but would never let me photograph him. Q. When did you meet Mr. Vanderbilt again after Lake George? A. Well, I came back to Jersey City and he said he took a job with the New York, New Haven and Hartford line on a new division that they were breaking in around Harlem on the far east side of the New York Central Line. I used to telephone him there and he would telephone me at Jersey City at my mother's house.

Q. All this time you knew him as Arthur Blowers? A. Yes.

Q. You didn't know him as William K. Vanderbilt? A. No. Though he was many years older than I he was charming. On December 30th, 1925 we met at the Grand Central station. He had a white gold wedding ring for me with a wreath design. We took the train to Stamford, Connecticut. We both made application for marriage and that application was read to us by George R. Close, the clerk of the court. Q. Where did you go from there? A. We went to 48 East 92nd Street. That is where we set up house-keeping. It was a beautiful duplex; had a large living room with a spiral staircase, a remodeled brownstone. Q. Did you become pregnant there? A. Yes. Our son William was born at home September, 1926. Q. Mr. Blowers paid the doctor? A. Yes, he paid Dr. McLean. I lived entirely on what Mr. Blowers paid. In August, 1927, my husband said he had to take a long railroad trip. I objected to that because I was expecting another child soon. While he was gone I saw in the newspapers his picture and a picture of my best friend and neighbor, Rose, together—

(The Court: It sounds fantastic — but the truth has often sounded fantastic.)

(continued on page 64)

WILLY K. (continued from page 26)

A. (interposing.) — I had a neighbor that came in, by the name of Rose, and when my husband went on his railroad trip, both of them disappeared and then I saw her picture — I recognized her first, Rosamund Lancaster Warburton, just married to William K. Vanderbilt, and there was his round picture below her, in the *New York American*, August 28th, 1927.

Q. When did you have your second child with Mr. Blowers?

A. October 5th, 1927. Q. Was this before or after the Rosamund— A. No, she came into the house when we were there before the first child was born and again later and in— Then my husband came back to me at 48 East 92nd Street and he revealed his identity to me. Q. Is that the first time you knew Arthur Blowers as William K. Vanderbilt? A. Right. Up to that time I believed he was Arthur Blowers. Q. Had he left his wife, Mrs. Warburton, at that time, when he came back to you? A. He certainly did. He lived with me right along, and we went to Jersey City, to Claymore Avenue, for the birth of our second child.

Q. Can you explain how your first son got the name of William?

A. I wanted to name him after my father Harris, and my husband said, "If you are going to name him after your father, name him after my father, too," so I was going to name him Arthur Harris Blowers, and he said, "No, my father's name was William," so, innocently, I named him after both grandfathers, William Harris Blowers. After he revealed his identity to me we named the following two children after his family.

Q. At that time were [you] ill in the mind? A. No, except for the shock that my neighbor Rose had taken my husband and that my husband was another personality, even regardless of the name.

Q. Do you recall anything about French's farmhouse? A. In 1928 my husband sent me up to French's Farmhouse at Lake Conega. I met Gloria Vanderbilt, then five or six years old. My children and Gloria and some other children were being boarded there—it is about 10 miles outside of Monticello.

Q. Did you receive love letters from your husband? A. Oh, yes, when he went away to adjust his affairs. Q. Where are those letters? A. I left a package containing them and my husband's officer's gold pin with Alfred Ross, a lawyer, on Broadway, Monticello for safe-keeping. When I had need of them to prove my relationship to William K. Vanderbilt, Mr. Ross wrote back, "A mysterious fire occurred and the package you left was burned."

Q. When was the last time you saw Mr. 'Blowers' Vanderbilt?

A. I saw him in the fall of 1943 in Virginia; he came to see our children. He still insisted he would do right by me and the children. Though he was always charming, he lied. I know it is startling and unbelievable, but I swear again to every statement I made. All this did not happen overnight—I know that my husband was William K. Vanderbilt.

There were five hearings. Witnesses who had 'seen' William K. Vanderbilt with Dora Blowers as Arthur Blowers were subpoenaed but never appeared. Dora Blowers' request for trial by jury was denied. As witness for the respondent, Harold Vanderbilt showed his social breeding; he was courteous and sympathetic to Dora Blowers but stated that though quite familiar with his brother's many amorous adventures he had no recollection of the Blowers association.

The Guaranty Trust with blurred scraps of paper and handwriting experts fashioned a broken-down roustabout, Arthur Blowers of Ticonderoga, in place of Willy K. as Dora's husband. Whether Dora and Arthur Blowers of Ticonderoga actually knew each other became a problem for the grave to answer, for Arthur Blowers of Ticonderoga conveniently died during the hearings. Also, it was unexplainably strange that the signature of Willy K. on the will and the signature of an Arthur Blowers on a 1939 motor vehicle license from Huntington, Long Island where Willy K. lived, were the same.

Poor people try to ape the rich; why should the rich be denied the privilege of aping the poor? Why shouldn't Willy K. have been allowed to taste the peculiar glory of coarse bread and bed with Dora Blowers? The rich are waking up and fighting for their democratic rights; multi-millionaires want to be reclassified as human beings and savor all the kicks of our pluralistic society; now they beg to be boot-lickers of the common man, striving to be servants of The People, battling each other to work as mayors, governors, and President.

On the stage of Inheritance Law a penniless, sweet, little old government employee is contradicted by a \$40 million protagonist, and yet there is an eerie feeling in the chamber that Dora Blowers certainly knew Willy K. The Court, weighing all factors, decides Dora Blowers is not to receive \$13 million and dismisses her petition.

If Dora Blowers fabricated her story why wasn't she punished for perjury or

committed? Was her relationship with Willy K. a psychic miracle? Was she a dream character in search of an author? Was all this an hallucinated hoax, or a very great injustice?

I revisited the locale of Vanderbilt's estate and sat at the bar of Mariner's Inn on the Northport shorefront. With me was Gordon Bushell, no longer young, but whose air still bore the gypsy earrings of the guy differently marked from the herd. Through the seascape window I again beheld Willy's place across the harbor, the baroque piles with the Spanish tile roofs, the hangar vacant of its metal birds, and in the harbor where royally bestrode his floating city of pleasure, the ALVA, was the bourgeois armada, the bobbing bottoms of the newly affluent little man.

The area surrounding Willy's sexing fief has bowed its neck to the fickle, fretful deity, Change. Gone are the salty clam-diggers, the *Spoon River Anthology* rustics and the mannered master-aping servant class to the rich. The Levittized man hath come and his pregnant prairie runneth over. Breathing upon Willy's lordly domain are education mills, theatrical supermarkets, a technicolor maze of pizza-oramas, toilet-bowloramas, this and that shoppes, cat and dog sanatoriums, eating factories, surrealistic temples vending soul insurance, kegling lanes, roadside burger and spun candy shrines, drive-ins, discount bazaars, green thumb marts, Mephisto's heavenly loan companies and all the material carnivalia of the atom-goosed United Statesian.

Willy bequeathed his estate and \$2 million for its maintenance to the county. Eagle's Nest, of yore paganly hallowed with Willy's sensuous revels, is now a decorous institution, a public museum; yet in truth, a memorial monument to his victorious, Olympian hedonism. Today common feet tread his Oriental rugs. Joe Jerk's eyes gawk at Willy's inactive bed, the palatial appointments, the gardens worthy of Louis XIV, with slavish awe. Joe Jerk is convinced that Mr. W. K. Vanderbilt, tycoon maker of railroads, was a lofty pillar of Democracy.

But Gordon Bushell and I, downing good Scotch, still vividly saw old Willy in his birthday suit on the sun-sparkling deck of the gleaming white ALVA entwined like a centaur with the nude exotic brown girl. To do justice to the past romantic age, that pose should be immortalized in marble alongside the stern bronze statue of Commodore Vanderbilt in front of great Grand Central station.

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