

Rocky Arredondo & My Mom Present...

THE COBRA'S NOSE

Vol. 27

You know what's fair? Life.

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The Cobra's Notes...

One day when Pat was working at the late Café Nikos, he told me about two women who had earlier walked past the restaurant's window—a cute trim blonde, and a not-cute, lumbering tragi-perm. "They didn't look like the same species," he said. "Orangutans and gorillas have more in common. Dogs and cats are more alike!" And it's weird to think that the actual, DNA difference between the most noble person and the most repulsive is dinky dinky dinky. The genetic difference between humans and chimps is less than two percent, for Pete's sake; the genetic dissimilarity between myself and The Pill is probably just a little more. That's why the amusement I find in the foibles of others is always tinged with a horrible familiarity.

A case in point: Some Cosmodemonic training classes are held in the building next door. I tell the trainees, "Your class is held in the building next door," and with my hand, indicate the direction. For the record, Cosmodemonic takes up the entirety of one building and has only one next door neighbor. Still, this direction causes no end of trouble. "What do you mean by 'building next door'?" they query. "Do I have to drive?" Some bravely head out and make it as far as the southernmost emergency exit on this building before returning with the unhappy news that the door is locked and they can't get in. "Your class is in the building next door," I tell them, "The building next door. Right over there. Next door." "The building next door..." they mutter dubiously as they leave. These are not isolated idiots. They occur even more frequently than the people on the phone who, dismayed to have reached the Cosmodemonic Receptionist, protest, "Well, I called a residence."

Now, I have my inane moments, which certain friends and family collect and trade like jewels. I can never, for instance, remember when speaking which one is the "J" and which is the "G." I make wrong turns constantly, even when going to familiar places like my house. I've gotten so bad with the minutia of jokes that I don't dare tell one that doesn't start with, "A man walked into a bar" and ends immediately thereafter, hopefully with the punch line. The list goes on and on, but I like to think I take responsibility for these lapses. After all, one thing that really bugs me is stupid people decrying the supposed stupidity of others, like a former roommate who upon seeing two cds apiece with the titles *All Things Must Pass*, *Tommy*, and *Quadrophenia* said, "Sharon bought these twice. I think that's real dumb." Or even worse, when they get all world weary, like this woman who calls Cosmodemonic a couple of times a week and asks for Angel or Angie. When I tell her we don't have employees by that name in this location, she emits a big sigh and says, "You do, but not at that location." Oh, right, I should have thought of that.

So here's my worry: given my record, should I be *allowed* to criticize such behavior? I mean, I know I have the right as an



Maximus! Maximus! I hereby hope *Gladiator* wins the Best Picture Oscar in March on the basis of Russell Crowe being a babe. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* would also be fine (babes in that one, too). *Traffic* probably deserves something for refraining from showing Michael Douglas's flat, withered ass, but that's all it has going for it.

American, but does my own feeble-mindedness give me more or less credibility in describing that of others? And how do I avoid the vituperation that plagues so many legitimate, famous, and well compensated efforts to which **THE COBRA'S NOSE** is an ignoble bastard relation? After all, we do share almost identical DNA, but they are better educated and paid.

I've taken precautions. I've asked several Cobra readers to put me out of my misery if I started down the slippery slope of *armudgeonliness*. Their eagerness to comply is equally heartening and spooky.

You can join in the fun, too, once I have the rules set. For instance, Pat proposed a ban on words like "cumudgeonliness," and I think that's an excellent start. I will also try to keep murderous impulses (like toward the trainee who this morning noted I got here, "bright and early...well, early, anyway!" har, har) off the page and in my heart where they belong. Other than that, I'm open to suggestions, helpful ones, not like "just stop being like that" because I've tried and it doesn't work.

Sharon C. McGovern
Editor/ Publisher/ Cobra-in-Chief

Damn, it Feels Good to be a Gangsta

Some movies are knockouts from the get go. They sweep you up like Ralph Fiennes gathering you in his arms and then...and then...and then there are some movies that you always knew you liked, but then they take off their glasses, run their fingers through their hair, and suddenly you realize you're in love. *Office Space*, for me, is in the latter category.

I under appreciated *Office Space* when it came out in 1999. It lacks the bravado of my official favorites for that year, but repeated viewings (thank you, cable!) have proved it to be a lasting gem. If you currently hold, have ever held, or ever expect to hold a job in your life, you will find something in *Office Space* familiar. For instance, just because you don't work in the food service industry doesn't mean you don't have a yappy, fake, overeager, overblonde co-worker named Byron, excuse me, Brian tattling on you and sucking up to your supervisor; just because you don't work in an office doesn't mean you've never had multiple bosses correcting the same mistake (or one boss who won't just tell you what your mistake is), or have never sat through a deadening corporate meeting.

These sorts of affronts that make work life hell are respectfully catalogued in *Office Space*. After a particularly aggravating day, programmer Peter Gibbons asks his neighbor Lawrence if anybody in his line of work—construction—ever accuses him of having “a case of the Mondays” if he seems to be feeling down. Lawrence, aghast, replies, “No, man, no. God no! A fella'd probably get his ass kicked for saying something like that.” And that's Peter's first glimpse of a better life. His real breakthrough comes when his girlfriend takes him to a hypnotherapist who puts Peter in a state of nonchalance, then dies and leaves him there. Freed from his misery, Peter begins to free himself from the things that make him miserable. He sleeps through the Saturday he was supposed to spend at work, and blithely hangs up on his girlfriend when she calls to yell at him for doing so. He had the feeling she was cheating on him anyway (“I get that feeling, too,” his friends concurred without follow-up). He violates one taboo by inviting a waitress to lunch during her shift, then demolishes another when he frankly discusses his dubious work habits with visiting hatchet men. Emboldened by these early successes, Peter becomes more lackadaisically brazen. Against Geto Boys' rap declaration “Damn, it Feels Good to be a Gangsta,” he commits acts of small and liberating vandalism in the office, while management and serf alike are struck dumb by his unprecedented behavior. Eventually, his sense of entitlement becomes hubristic; he dares too much and risks a terrible end.



Gangstas: Samir Nagonnaworkhereanymore & Michael Bolton



Gangsta: Milton

With *Beavis and Butt-head*, *King of the Hill*, and *Office Space*, (based on a series of short “Milton” cartoons which I haven't seen) writer-director Mike Judge has staked out a place in three seemingly threadbare genres—adventures of idiot teens, suburban sitcom, and workplace comedy—and invested them with rare suppleness and invention. Judge is a smart guy and a humanist who honors his creations because he has insight into the entire context of their lives. *Beavis* and *Butt-head* are as stupid as you'd care to allege, but their characterizations are authentic and specific. They are anti-cute *boys* (after a body cavity search in *Beavis and Butt-head Do America*, *Butt-head* wonders, “Did I just score?”) of a familiar stripe. *Butt-head*, for instance, has a mouthful of braces, representing a skewed—though far from uncommon—vision of child welfare where faith in orthodontia trumps parental involvement; and as repulsive and misguided as they are, there's a poignancy to how blasé they are about the beatings they take, and how they expect abandonment so utterly that they are not at all phased when it inevitably happens. *King of the Hill* is both a return and a reinvention of family sitcoms in which father doesn't know everything, but he is a thoughtful, capable, adult, and an anomaly in the in the history of television in that Hank Hill has only a high school education and yet isn't fat, crude, or buffoonish. Even my beloved *Simpsons* wasn't willing to take that leap.

With *Office Space*, Judge looks at jobs and takes seriously the indignities and compromises that come with a paycheck, but with an inclusiveness and moderation that never panders to a smug Power to the People mentality. Gibbons is a primitive, as his simian name indicates. His dream is to do nothing, and it's a kick to watch him start to live that ethos. His glib attacks on cubicle walls and rah-rah company banners are happy and welcome, but they pale with the ferocity with which his displaced co-workers Michael and Samir take after a hated piece of equipment because they made an honest investment in their work and were betrayed. The tenuous and disingenuous loyalty businesses show toward their serfs is more than a matter of cheese moving, it's an assault on personal security and dignity. You can hear it in the chortling of the managers and “efficiency experts” Bob and Bob in *Office Space*, and in the chirpy tones of the Grim Reapers from Cosmodemonic HR who occasionally descend upon us, concealing their bat wings and sickles beneath (cont. on page 6)

Adventures with Psychos

First in a series of "Psychos in the Workplace" articles.

St. Janet of the TP, in the evenings when she isn't working on her master's degree, volunteers at her local hospital. That is partly why she is a saint. The best part of the arrangement as far as I'm concerned is that when something interesting happens there she emails me all about it. I got more than I expected last week when I asked how the volunteering had gone the night before:

It was great! For one thing, my favorite doctor in the whole world was there. Yep, you guessed it--the wonderful, amazing, incredible Dr. Stu Brilliant. I just love him. Could you imagine going to the ER and hearing "Hello, I'm Dr. Brilliant, how can I help you today?" And, if that wasn't enough excitement--there were three crazy people there. I mean really crazy. They had to call down two psyche doctors and security because we had no idea what these people were going to do. I was almost sorry to leave.

One guy had been in a car accident. They wanted to do a CAT scan of his head, but he wouldn't change out of his clothes or take his jewelry off. Dr. Brilliant told him he wouldn't be released until someone came to pick him up so the guy started making random phone calls from the yellow pages. He would just pick a number, call, and tell whoever answered that he had been in an accident and needed someone to come pick him up. He frequently yelled from his room, "What state is this? Where am I?"

The ER staff were trying to get a urine sample from another guy--they had to figure out what he was on because he wouldn't tell. He wouldn't do it, said he couldn't. He stalked around the ER and drank whatever he could find. He went into the staff kitchen started taking stuff out of the refrigerator. He stalked around the reception desk then grabbed the bottle of Pepsi a nurse had sitting there. When Dr. Brilliant told him he had five minutes to fill the cup or he was getting a catheter, the guy started screaming, "Don't you threaten me! This is America and I don't have to do anything I don't want to!!"

The last crazy chick showed up just before I left. The nurse went in to get a blood sample and the chick started swinging a chair around the room and screaming, "Don't f#@*ing touch me!! Don't anyone f#@*ing touch me!!"

As noted above, I hope this will be the first in a series of articles relating Adventures with Psychos, especially at work, but anywhere would be fine, really. I know you've got them--lunatics are everywhere these days, so just write them down and send them in. This means you, Zebe. 🍷

Cookin' with Cobra

...and Relatives



What with people rolling their eyes and turning shades of pale I'd never seen before, I kind of get the idea most Cobra readers will not be supping on Cobra's Breakfast Delight anytime soon. I thought Aureng Zebe was interested in making a personal modification when asked if instead of Apple Jacks knockoffs he could use Buckwheats; but then he shouted, "No! You can't! They don't make Buckwheats anymore!" Leave it to him to get all political. Anyway, to them I say, "Your loss, Bucko."

On a more constructive note my Auntie Jan, who has a knack for taking lemons and making divinity fudge, emailed the following:

I finally found something that qualifies and that I will actually eat.

So, without any further ado, let me present...

A Salsa/Dip Sort of Avocado Thing

- 🥑🥑 2 ripe but firm avocados cut into ½ inch chunks, salted and peppered to taste
- 🥛🥛 ¼ cup sour cream
- 🌮🌮 ¼ cup taco sauce or canned salsa or the equivalent (the green stuff might be fun, it's pink with regular taco sauce)

Mix and serve with tortilla chips; also really good stacked on tamales

I have to admit, I balked at the number of ingredients. Auntie Jan did say that in a pinch, the salt and pepper could be eliminated, but she won't be responsible for the consequences. If you have any questions or suggestions, or find you still hanker after regular salsa after trying this recipe, please address them to:

**Jan Arredondo,
Culinary Genius,
c/o this publication.** 🍷

A Lovesong from a Great American Smart Ass

The world is full of smart asses, though as a patriot I like to think America leads the world in sheer numbers. Unfortunately, the "ass" part is nearly almost more prominent than the "smart," and they tend to be a plague and affliction upon us all. A welcome exception is Tom Lehrer.

Lehrer has smarts, alright. He graduated from Harvard with a degree in mathematics at the age of eighteen, went on to work for the Army at Los Alamos (where, according to some reports, he invented the vodka Jell-O shot as a way to evade a ban on "alcoholic beverages"), then returned to his *alma mater* to teach math, a position he holds to this day though he spends his winters teaching at the University of Santa Cruz. The second part of the equation is demonstrated in the songs he wrote and recorded in the fifties and sixties which stand as the best satire in the annals of American song.



TOM LEHRER: Vol. 27's Hero of Romance

Channeled though Lehrer's brain and piano, dated controversies over the MLF Treaty ("Once all the Germans were warlike and mean, but that couldn't happen again/ We taught them a lesson in 1918 and they've hardly bothered us since then") and the Vatican II Conference ("Get into that long processional, step into that small confessional/ There the guy that's got religion'll tell you if your sin's original/ If it is try playing it safer, drink the wine and chew the wafer/ Two, four, six, eight, time to transubstantiate!") have a lasting snap and impact. On lingering issues like pollution ("brush with toothpaste, then rinse your mouth with industrial waste") and smut (the only thing he really seems to be in favor of, "Stories of tortures used by debauchers/ lurid, licentious, and vile, make me smile"), his songs have a contemporary resonance, and in fact are frequently played to amplify news stories on television and radio.

Since this is Valentine's Day I am irresistibly drawn to Lehrer's songs of love, and since most of you won't receive this publication until the holiday is well over I selected "When You Are Old and Gray" from his *oeuvre*, in honor of all that time destroys. What follows is Tom Lehrer's own introduction to the song on his live album, *An Evening Wasted with Tom Lehrer*:

The most popular type of popular song is of course the love song, and I'd like to illustrate several subspecies of this form during the evening. First of all, the type of love song where the fellow tells the girl that although the years ahead will almost certainly destroy every vestige of her already dubious charms, that nonetheless his love for her will shine on forever through the years, you know. Another example of stark realism in the popular song. This particular example is called "When You Are Old And Gray," and I'd like to dedicate it to anyone in the audience who is still in love with each other.

WHEN YOU ARE OLD & GRAY

Since I still appreciate you,
Let's find love while we may.
Because I know I'll hate you
When you are old and gray.

So say you love me here and now,
I'll make the most of that.
Say you love and trust me,
For I know you'll disgust me
When you're old and getting fat.

An awful debility,
A lessened utility,
A loss of mobility
Is a strong possibility.
In all probability
I'll lose my virility
And you your fertility
And desirability,
And this liability
Of total sterility
Will lead to hostility
And a sense of futility,
So let's act with agility
While we still have facility,
For we'll soon reach senility
And lose the ability.

Your teeth will start to go, dear,
Your waist will start to spread.
In twenty years or so, dear,
I'll wish that you were dead.

I'll never love you then at all
The way I do today.
So please remember,
When I leave in December,
I told you so in May.

Ghost, Interrupted

The following is something I've been thinking of doing for a long time, to feature a serialized novel in *The Cobra's Nose*. In my original conception, however, somebody else was writing it, because I figured, "If it's good enough for Thackeray and Dickens, it's way too good for me." But since quality has never been an issue for the *Nose* staff and I do need something to put on page five from month to month, I'm giving it a try—at least until I run out of ideas, get bored, or respond to the inevitable protests. Oh, and I hate the title, so somebody think of a better one, okay?



Chapter One

Breath stuck in my throat like a fishbone and hot iron bloomed in my chest, then cooled. I rolled away from the chill that was the last thing I ever felt, because I rolled out of my body. It was dead.


If the room were darker I could have seen clearer and maybe found my way out, but bright hot days are full of noise and vibrations that still tend to confuse me. The death of my body took me by surprise. In fact, if it didn't take everybody by surprise, that is to say, if somebody knew my heart (I hope it was my heart and not some less glamorous organ) would just quit like that, so young and sudden, and didn't warn me early on so I could have done a bit more with it, I would be mad at him, her, or them forever. I've been around only a short while compared to some, but I think murder would give me a rage with legs so to speak. Or at least an excuse to hang around. I don't know why I'm here. In this state, though, I've survived several mediums, an exorcism or two, and that girl I whom I think must have been the daughter of Satan himself, especially after I met what she conjured up. If I hadn't been so depleted when she left I would have done my best to follow her and haunt her past the end of her natural life, then maybe spend eternity completing my revenge. Even if I don't have that item on my resume, I'd like to think I've done well enough for myself. Better than some of the sad characters I've met, anyway, like Mrs. Hera

Mrs. Hera was the ghost my sisters and I suspected lived in our house, though we never actually saw her and didn't know she was Greek. Oh, and her name probably wasn't "Mrs. Hera" either, that's just what I started calling her when I decided she was wasn't Spanish after all. She would take little things, and hide them in a gigantic cupboard in the kitchen that could well have been there since Mrs. Hera's mortal residence. It was wider than the back door and almost as tall as the ceiling. It easily contained all of our silver, china, and linen—both good and everyday—with plenty of room left for drawers devoted to bits of string, wire, rubber bands, and paper, scissors and other small tools, school and art work—all the stuff you find in kitchen drawers, but swelled up to accommodate the space. When we were younger, we suspected the upper regions contained Christmas gifts. When my brother Sam was ten, he dragged a chair over, put two bundles of newspapers on it, and broke open his head when the tower wobbled and collapsed. In retrospect, it's a wonder he isn't in this state telling this story rather than me, but we'd never let a little thing like a concussion or stitches stop us from looking in every drawer every year. We never found presents, but we did find Mrs. Hera's stash.


It was in a tiny drawer on the top right hand corner of the cupboard. All of the drawers in that row were pretty small, but this one was only half the size of the smallest. It was the hardest to reach, always stuck at least a little, and sometimes wouldn't open at all. Inside was an assortment of...mostly trash, to tell you the truth. Shiny pieces of paper from cigarette packages, neatly coiled lengths of thread, an oregano leaf, two sewing needles, a penny, things like that. We just took them for an extension of the flotsam that filled the rest of the cupboard and didn't notice at first how primly they were arranged and how that drawer alone was never contaminated by a single speck of dust. Still, we dutifully checked the drawer at Christmastime, thinking it was big enough for

jewelry at least. We finally caught on the year we found the necklace.

It was a gift, not for Christmas, but for my older sister Rhoda's birthday four months earlier. It was a simple, ordinary, gold-plated chain that looked quite at home amongst the other items. When it had gone missing a mere two weeks after it was given, Rhoda raged around the house looking for it and hissing violent threats against anybody who might have dared touched it. Nobody would have, least of all her siblings. Offences against her property were punishable by...well, something vague yet terrible. Our brother was the only one of us kids (besides Rhoda) who could even reach the drawer at that time and its fastidiousness counted him out. She couldn't question our parents as the upper reaches of the cupboard were off limits since Sam's tumble. So she came up with the story of a kleptomaniac sprite, partly to explain certain disappearances, mostly to terrify my younger sister, Amy, and me. We suspected she was behind the petty theft that occurred in the house—and probably was for most—but one weekend when Rhoda was out of town a rag Mother was using to polish silver vanished, just like that. She could see Amy and me through the kitchen window messing around with the tire swing, so we weren't serious suspects, but she called us in and asked us anyway. Amy burst into tears and I got so lightheaded suddenly that I sat right down on the floor. Mother's irritation was replaced by alarm and we blabbed *everything*, even though we were scared to death of the ghost, how we would be punished for investigating forbidden terrain, and what Rhoda would do to us for telling. Mother did look pretty hot for a minute, but was curious enough to struggle with the drawer. When it finally opened she sent us to our room, but not before a fresh burst of pungent polish smell filled the kitchen.

Mrs. Hera swiped lots of things over the years, and once my eyes adjusted, I could see her plainly fussing over that cupboard until the entire thing acquired a subtle glow. It was so intensely hers that I never felt comfortable getting right up next to it for more than a few moments at the time, but it had an undeniable charisma that was fascinating to creatures like us. The drawer became a sort of door, and the kitchen got to be busier than a church picnic, but that was later on. 

Cookin' with Cobra... *Update*

Pat was looking over our Auntie Jan's **Cookin' with Cobra** submission and started giggling about the very first step. In my experience, recipes don't usually get this sort of reaction unless they contain the words "springform pan," so I had to ask what he found so darned funny. "I can't imagine you cutting an avocado into chunks," he said, "That's like five steps all by itself." Apparently, avocados have this really tough skin that needs to be painstakingly removed, *plus* they have a big seed in the middle of them that you have to watch out for. On the up side, according to my blessed aunt, avocados are fairly easy to come by as they "are grown in such delightful climates" (like ours here in Arizona, so ha). She recommends a nice little four-pack that can be purchased at Costco, or of course you could always go to your neighborhood Basha's. If you're feeling pretentious, you could shop AJ's, which would probably sell you avocados that were grown organically or free-range or some other thing that would positively impact the taste of your Salsa/Dip Sort of Avocado Thing. 

(cont. from page 2) Ann Taylor suits. It's a power as fickle as it is ruthless—the file directly below the delinquent Peter's in the Bobs' extraneous employee pile is that of his "unholy pig of a boss"—and a necessary fixation of helpless rage. There are dozens of other keenly observed examples of petty degradation in *Office Space*, but also an awareness that there's not much to be done about them. Perhaps that's why so many critics accused *OS* of losing it's nerve/vision in the last half. But as crappy as life and work can be, there is an integrity to *Office Space* that cannot let it get out of hand. Peter is not *Norma Rae*, and he certainly doesn't work in *Matewan*, and to turn his revolt into a polemic would be inappropriate and an insult to labor. The outlandish equation he makes between a bit of stupid officiousness in Joanna's job with Nazism is a sign of his corruption, and it isn't permitted to stand. There's petulance in the world and there's oppression, and Judge is sensible enough to know which is which.

That's why his use of rap music is so canny. It a good one-off joke when the dweebiest looking white guy in the film is caught enthusiastically singing it in his car during the opening credits. It gets better when he turns it down, lowers his voice to a mutter, and locks his door when a black street salesman makes his rounds past the car, and got another ironic twist when the rap lover's name was revealed to be Michael Bolton. Judge doesn't settle there, though. His mating of "Damn, it Feels Good to be a Gangsta" with Peter's low key rebellion and "Still" with Michael and Samir's violence evince a keen understanding of the fraud of outlaw chic and the wincing pain of disenfranchisement, but appropriating music that reflects an experience so far removed from that of the inhabitants of *Office Space* gives both an extra comic dimension. And if that weren't enough, two of the songs on the soundtrack are hip-hop and R&B renditions of the hit country songs "Take this Job and Shove It" and "9 to 5." Like rap and R&B, country music is the work of a traditional underclass, but the combination is fresh and surprising. Furthermore, both songs are from a



Gangsta: Joanna shows her boss some flair

distinct time and place, the recession era 80s, where men telling their bosses to shove jobs was an empowering daydream and under-appreciated women slaving away was commonplace. *Office Space*, however, is fixed on the crest of the biggest economic boom in the history of the United States. White male job insecurity—especially for technical types—was at an all time low, but it's a woman, Peter's waitress girlfriend Joanna, who tells off her boss with flair, and men who thanklessly labor on iffy projects (in this case, the Y2K problem, which proved to be a *fin de cycle* non-event).

Office Space is ultimately about something as unfashionable as living with adult choices and responsibility rather than succumbing to juvenile impulsiveness. After a fight in which Peter's proletariat poses mask basic sexual jealousy, Joanna tells him to call her when he grows up, but since that won't ever happen *don't call*. But he does grow up, and gracefully. Mike Judge is turning out to be one of America's greatest, and unlikeliest, advocates of maturity. ☞

End Nose... When my grandfather's wife of thirty-odd years died a few weeks ago, I asked my mom—her executrix—what would become of her remains. "She wanted to be with Daddy," said Mom. And where was he? "In an urn in her closet." As a long range plan, that was fairly dubious. Fortunately, Granddad had another final resting place in mind, and this last weekend, a family contingent took him and Mirtia there. Now I have to admit I have a weakness for cemeteries generally, and when I visit them I dream and plan like some girls do when looking at *Bride* magazine. It simply makes more sense: marriage may or may not happen, death is pretty well guaranteed. Like weddings, funeral parties can be simple or extravagant, or to quote Steve Martin, "Now when I die, don't think I'm a nut/ Don't want no fancy funeral/ Just one like old King Tut." Frankly, I don't think my family and friends are impressed enough by my threats to haunt them to give me the King Tut treatment, so I think I'll go with my second choice, which is a simple affair at the Solomanville Cemetery. Solomanville is a town in the Safford-Thatcher area of eastern Arizona, the ancestral home of the Pace family of which I am a proud member, so I have a familial claim on its graveyard. In fact, Granddad's stepfather's family (there will not be a quiz on this) has a

Cobra Headquarters family plot there that, as Uncle Scott noted, could have been taken from a Sergio Leone western. It is on the ridge of one of the several hills that comprise the cemetery, enclosed by a short, rusty metal gate, with a tall granite monument in the middle and a weather beaten wooden cross a few feet in front of the entrance. It would be a terrific place for my remains to reside, but really anywhere on the grounds would be fine, under a pile of rocks with a view of Mt. Graham. I would prefer a tombstone of any size as long as it has a winged skull on it (Mom says, "Sometimes I wish we'd never taken you to Boston"), but so many of the burial mounds are anonymous that I'm even rethinking that. I'm resigned to not having a funeral for the ages, but a in desert where not much happens geologically speaking, a pile of rocks can be conspicuous for a very long time, but not prissy and false like a more formal arrangement. But the most attractive aspect of a burial in eastern Arizona (and yes, I will try to arrange it for wintertime) is the desert itself, so hot and dry that dead things desiccate rather than rot, and when the wind blows through even the cemeteries you smell wildflowers no matter what season. So, that's my thought as of Valentine's Day, 2001, and a modest request I think, though Amy's final wish, "When, or if, I should ever die, I want my internal organs taken out and thrown in Karen Stilling's face. Karen was a snot-faced girl in high school and if you saw her, you would want to hurl your organs at her too," has given me some ideas. Have a pleasant month.

✉ Sharon C. McGovern,
Cobra-in-Chief
3600 N. Hayden, #2803
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

☞ (480) GAY KATS

✉ shmcgovern@ikon.com
thecobrasnose@yahoo.com

🏠 www.thecobrasnose.com

Use them.