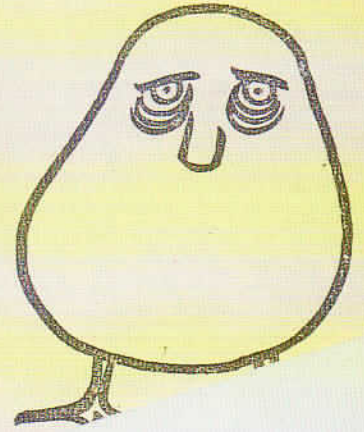


freethought criticism and satire

# The Realist



December 1961

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From  
Cont

# Best of The Realist

## The 60s' Most Outrageously Irreverent Magazine

Introduction by Ken Kesey... With contributions by  
♦ Mort Sahl ♦ Kurt Vonnegut ♦ Henry Morgan ♦ Woody Allen ♦ Terry Southern  
♦ Marvin Kitman ♦ Lenny Bruce ♦ Robert Anton Wilson ♦ Dick Gregory ♦ Joseph Heller  
♦ Norman Mailer ♦ Ed Koren ♦ Theodore Sturgeon  
♦ And many others

### Edited by Paul Krassner

...his freshman  
...college"  
...problem involving *Catcher*  
...iversity in East Lansing:  
...h instructors, in exercis-  
...make up their own re-  
...ly included *The Catcher*  
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...spapers, and the number  
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But it is only since 1955 that controversies involving *Catcher* have made the front pages of newspapers, and the number of documented, publicized instances probably doesn't amount to over a dozen. The case, however, as more and more young people who were deeply impressed by the

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...and fear of  
...for people, he  
...toes."  
...ever since I decided to arm  
...er, and I'm getting tired. The reason  
...ense is that I live in fear my neighbors will  
...empty my fallout shelter because it is inadequately  
fortified.

I think I have a good reason to fear my neighbors in Leonia, N. J. They are mostly nice people, but intellectuals—college professors, artists, scenic designers—none of whom are planning to build fallout shelters. In theory, I guess, they would rather be dead than Red. But in practice they all are planning to use my shelter. I was sure of that the very first day I started digging.

"What are you digging?" one of my neighbors asked as I lifted the first shovelful of earth from my greensward.

"A chicken house," I said, as neighborly as I could be under the circumstances.

Actually, I was digging a pit for the machine gun I hoped to buy to cover a sector of the front opposite

(Continued on Page 11)



To Jimmy, that apocryphal  
8-year-old junkie who won a  
Pulitzer Prize for the  
Washington Post.

"There is no laughter in  
Heaven."

—Mark Twain

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Krassner is writing an auto-  
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ances as an investigative satirist at night  
clubs, theaters, and college campuses.  
He has a daughter, Holly. When *People*  
Magazine called Krassner "father of the  
underground press," he replied, "I de-  
mand a blood test."



## BOREDOM AS A WAY OF LIFE

by Jean Shepherd

A British writer recently made some comments about boredom as being one of the three major enemies of mankind in the 20th century. However, I differ strongly with him on his conclusions. It's such a complex problem. Boredom, and the values of today, lead to some very, very intriguing things.

I can only see a kind of gigantic advancing wave of Dynamic Slobbism. Of a very special kind. Of a kind that does not look like Slobbism. Eighteen million people will buy copies of Descartes and keep it for doorstops. Large numbers of people will buy LP records of Haydn just to make sure that their tweeters are working, and will only use it to demonstrate their stereo. It's the kind of thing that you see in the theater today. Endless numbers of people go and buy tickets, but they do not give al-



most-anything-you-care-to-say-they-don't-give for the theater, and particularly what's being *said* in the theater.

It's a very interesting kind of thing that we're working into. It's part and parcel of the peculiar sort of physical restlessness that is, I believe, the handmaiden to boredom itself.

Now, is boredom physical, or is it mental? That's a very good question. Most people like to assume that boredom is mental. A lot of people will automatically say: "Well, if a guy's thinking, he's not bored."

I don't know. I have never seen boredom approached as a physical problem. And almost all of our world is devoted to avoiding physicality at all costs. Paradoxically enough, some of the most bored people I've known are some of the most intellectual people I've known. We like to believe that if people learn a lot about poetry, about music, about English Literature, they will not be bored.

Well, I must say that some of the most dynamically bored—some of the most *dangerously* bored—people I've known, have been steeped in this sort of intellectualism. Now this is not an

anti-intellectualism spiel I'm giving here. It's something entirely different.

I believe that one of the prime misunderstood areas of boredom is the physical side. And I am not recommending physicality as a cure for boredom, but I say that these two are intertwined. In a very subtle way.

Now *artificial* physicality, on the other hand, can be even more boring than artificial intellectuality. In short, some of the most bored people I've known are golfers. I don't know why. Perhaps it's because their physical problem is artificial. In other words, the sense of necessity is not there in a golf game. I think artificial conflicts are always in the end probably the most deadeningly boring things.

On the other hand, you like to feel that: "No, I'm not bored when I play golf." That is perhaps because you have other conflicts in your life. Golf itself is a *divertissement* and nothing more. But the minute the world becomes centered around golf, look out. In short, when golf becomes the primary goal of a life, then there are problems. It's just like a guy who is a fisherman, and if you go fishing three weeks out of the year, it's wildly exciting.

But if somebody said to you: "From now on until the end of time, you can fish seven days a week, sixteen hours a day!"—by the end of the third day you are looking for somebody to kill.

Interesting problem. On the other hand, I say that Beauty—and Art, too—is a *divertissement*. We like to believe it can become a total involvement. Forget it. There are evidences in past civilizations where it didn't work, among them the Greeks. If you become totally involved in Beauty, then Beauty becomes the most supreme boredom because there is no reason for Beauty any longer. I think Beauty is beautiful because it is a surcease. Beauty is beautiful because it is that one tiny taste of a superb herb in the middle of something that is otherwise sour and bitter. The minute that Beauty becomes the soup, you will look for the sour and bitter taste; it will become the Beauty.

In short, a nation built around Beauty will look for the supreme ugliness, as *it* will then become the supreme Beauty. To carry it even further, War could become the supreme achievement of Beauty.

It's fascinating. To me, it is. I'm waiting to see, because I feel more and more people are driven to things by the sheer boredom of non-things.

I've known more and more Peace people who've become angrier and angrier because Peace has somehow continued. The other day, two thousand people began to club each other for Peace, in Trafalgar Square. But there was no war. Nobody had dropped an atom bomb, and nobody was about to. So—to me—they got very bored with non-War and began to hit each other on the head in the name of non-War.

And I say that Peace will become more violent as War be-



comes less likely. Now, that sounds like a paradox. It is.

I have a lot of very hard-hitting, angry, Liberal friends. Nothing irritated them more than to find Kennedy elected. They were the first people to be angry about Kennedy. Why? Because they weren't interested in winning at all; they were interested in *fighting*. Some people are only happy when fighting for a Cause. They are unhappy when the Cause comes about.

I know a famous cartoonist who spent six years writing angry anti-Nixon cartoons, because he thought that Nixon was going to win. The minute Nixon lost, he became even angrier, and now he has been doing more and more, even angrier, anti-Kennedy cartoons.

Fascinating problem. I know a guy who went on a Freedom Ride and who was profoundly disappointed because they didn't burn his bus. Told me that. I know a famous writer who was on a Peace demonstration down in the Village one day when they were having an Air Raid drill. He was angry because the police didn't arrest him. He was mad because he would have been very happy to have written an angry editorial in the *Village Voice* about how they clubbed him. They didn't do anything. They just said: "Well, okay, you wanna stand by the bushes, all right. That's your problem." He was really teed off, and said: "That shows how dishonest the fuzz is! That shows how rotten the fuzz really is!"

The thing I'm driving at here is that as we approach what we call Paradise, the more boredom is going to be a problem. More and more as you watch television commercials you will see that the big theme is "Less work for Mama." Mama will find other work. It's liable to be not exactly the sort of thing Norman Vincent Peale has in mind when he's talking about Good Works.

More and more, within every industry, you know, the idea and the aim is to lessen responsibility. The 35-hour week will give way to the 20-hour week eventually, and finally to the 5-hour week. Of course, what that means is no responsibility at all. If a guy's only needed 5 hours a week, he's not needed at all. Forget it.

Well, the more you are left to your own resources, the more you are left to no responsibility, the more you are prone to that most dynamic of all forces—boredom.

Boredom is not a passive force. People like to think it is; it is not.

And don't think for one minute that you won't be bored. You know, that's an intriguing thing. Many people feel, and it's a wonderful thought . . . we have so many wonderful ideas and ideals that in practice have no relationship to reality. In short, they do not work. One of the great examples of this is:

"If given more time, people will become more interested in the things which they always would have been interested in had they been given time. Like Art."

Well, I'd like to make some sad facts salient to you. If you are familiar with any of the *Better Homes & Gardens*-type magazines, you can look through hundreds and hundreds of copies, pictures of modern homes in the suburbs, and you will find *rarely* a book in evidence. Hardly ever do they discuss having bookshelves built. If so, it's for knick-knacks. We like to think there's more reading? Get it out of your skull. There's more book *buying* in many ways. Like paperbacks. I wonder how many people own them but never read them?

You know, buying is a positive action today that has no relationship to what is being *bought*. A guy made an interesting point to me the other day: he remembers when his mother and his father would take him to buy a coat. Or: "We're gonna go to Gimbel's to buy a tablecloth today." But now people will say: "I'm going shopping." They don't know what they're going to buy, nor do they have any idea in mind. Shopping has become a sport just the way tiddlywinks or tennis is.

Boredom has something to do with center of focus. Are you aware that boredom often doesn't *look* like boredom? Four hundred and fifty ladies on the 3rd floor of Gimbel's can be, if you watch carefully, absolute studies of boredom in motion. It *looks* like they're involved, but they're not involved at all. They're merely *moving*, which is a very different thing. It is hard to keep their attention focused on any one counter for more than 15 or 20 milliseconds, because they don't, in short, *need* any of the things they're after. And so, this is another kind of boredom, a very dangerous kind.

All over the world, war movies are now a big thing, particularly in Russia. Almost all of the big novels in the past 15 years in Russia have been written about wars. And, of course, we have now many TV shows about wars of one kind or another. Because a war, you see, is the ultimate of boredom in motion, it's the ultimate of a dynamic point of view. There are good guys and bad guys. And furthermore, you are playing. Even if you're ten thousand miles from the front, you are given a part.

We've got some great things ahead. We use such words as "automation," but these words really don't describe the revolution that we're part of. I think that a thousand years from now, if we survive as a race, people will look back to this period, right now, as one of the great pivotal points when man became totally useless. Particularly to himself. Hardly any man ever got a phone call from that day on that said: "We need you, Fred, and nobody else."

And that was a great, great social revolution, and probably the beginning of the most violent period in all of history.

