

Chapter Fourteen: Peggy Organizes the N.A.Z.I. Party
from [Beercans on the Side of the Road: The Story of Henry the Hitchhiker](#)

Abstract: Nazis march in Taylorville. Jack the jackass sticks ass in Adolf's ear. News at 6.

.... An unusual news drama was unfolding while I was in Taylorville and it culminated the Saturday before I left. It seemed that the year before, an official of the local Nazi Party had burned down the fence and slaughtered 10,000 head of cattle that belonged to a Jewish cattle farmer. He was doing time now and the rest of the party had announced a march through town and a rally to be held at the jail to organize his defense drive. It had originally been scheduled for a year ago when his conviction was handed down, but the Jewish community, small though it was, had risen in indignation and challenged in court the legal right of the Nazis to parade their brand of prejudice and bigotry through the streets. The Nazis fought back by raising the cry of "First Amendment." The Jews countered with the "Right to cry 'fire' in a crowded theatre" argument, claiming that the mere presence of the Nazis could inflame the emotions of the townsfolk enough to cause a riot, but they lost and the march and rally were set for that Saturday.

The conservative press supported the Jews, while conceding that their opinion was based more on moral feelings than legal precedents, and so did the shrewd politicians, who knew full well that there were more Jewish sympathizers in their constituency than Nazi sympathizers. The mayor of Taylorville, who had survived a scandal the year before that found him on the wrong side of a police raid on a downtown whorehouse and who knew that it would be an issue in his up and coming bid for re-election, announced self-righteously that, yes, he would uphold the constitution of this great country and permit the march to proceed but that he did not support their racist doctrine and was even so offended by it that, if in the event there was a counter-demonstration, he would be willing to speak at it to make his opinion known.

Naturally, this was a carte blanche invitation to all peace-love groups in town to organize a counter-demonstration, which they did. It was also an obvious hint from the mayor that he wanted to speak at it, which he did.

According to Peggy, the whole scene was a farce because it was so predictable, so she organized a counter-counter-demonstration to counter both the demonstration and the counter-demonstration. "The Nazis' best weapon is their public reputation," she explained before the big day. "They instill feelings of hatred and fear into everything that bears their name. They issue orders by threat alone and people obey because 'they're the Nazis.' Now they're threatening to hold a march and people are reacting defensively with hatred and fear. Some fear the Nazis and will probably hide in their houses all day. Others are promising to 'give those damn Nazis some of their own medicine.' Either way, that's just what the Nazis want. We're playing their game and they know how to respond, so they continue to dominate the game and we help them promote their macho image. We have to play a different game."

Meanwhile, she continued, the national media had already created a major spectacle out of what otherwise would have been an insignificant march. "Newspapers, magazines, and TV and radio stations all over the country will be there to cover it. Anything that happens that day will be new. We can co-opt the headlines by attacking the Nazis where they're strongest. Since the Nazi reputation is effective only when people take them seriously, we have to not take them

seriously. In fact, not only should we not fear them, we should laugh at them, and relate to them as the clowns that they are.”

What Peggy did was to invite the community, through posters that she hung on smooth surfaces all over town with a sponge and Pet Milk so they couldn't be torn down, to: “Join the N.A.Z.I. Party.” The party was organized by a group of activist Yippies who called themselves the Nutty And Zany Idiots, and whose initials spelled N.A.Z.I. The participants gathered at the college, where make-up specialists from the theatre department painted their faces white and their noses red. They all wore swastika armbands on their arms and marched to the park in goosestep formation. At the front of the line was another clown, this one with a black painted mustache: “Der Fürermonger—Adolf Hitler.”

Between Adolf and the other marchers was a cart being pulled by a jackass named Jack. In the back of the cart, a couple women held a giant mirror in the direction of the marchers so they could see their own reflection. Symbolically, Peggy explained, this showed that our march was the mirror image of the other Nazi march.

At the park, everyone gathered around a stage and Adolf rose to address the crowd. The crowd began chanting, “Stick it in his ear, Jack,” because the theme for the march, which appeared on all the posters along with the appropriate picture, had been “Watch Jack stick it in Adolf's ear.” Bill led Jack on stage and positioned Jack's ass in Adolf's face. The crowd roared with approval, and then Peggy announced that the N.A.Z.I. Party would now begin and everyone was invited to join. Refreshments included bagels and two-cents-plains and the crowd danced the hora to the accompaniment of Peggy on her guitar.

We all had a great time, much to my relief. I had expressed misgivings about possible violence at the rally but Peggy dismissed them as unfounded and unnecessary paranoia. “They're marching to the jail, we're marching to the park, and that's close enough for me,” she explained. “I don't want to meet them until the next morning's paper includes us in the same article.”

Further, she predicted, “The media will love it. The fearful image that the Nazis nurture will be punctured and the story told the next day will be one of absurdity rather than one of fear.”

Actually, only about thirty people showed up to march, but the Nazis didn't do any better. The counter-march had about a hundred because the mayor was there, but some of them left early and joined us in the park.

Sure enough, the voracious appetite of the media gobbled us up. The mayor, who was known to be a closet anti-Semite, was blasted by the press for “prostituting his beliefs, as perverted as they are, for the sake of a few votes,” a charge he didn't need seeing as he was trying to erase his whorehouse escapade from the public's memory. The Nazis were outraged by our taunts and a small band showed up at the park to hassle us, but when they saw the cameras they retreated because they didn't want to look like fools. We, however, did succeed in looking like fools, which is what we wanted seeing as we paraded as their mirror images. The festivities began at noon so that the TV stations could write their stories and get them in to their editors for the 6 o'clock news. That night, when Walter Cronkite announced “That's the way it was,” we celebrated and got high on a batch of Bill's special carob brownies....