

# Short

Continued from Page 7

home drunk like Whitey had, waking up the next morning alongside the road, next to a woman he hadn't remembered ever being introduced to. Evan was beginning to feel fortunate to still be alive at 36. It seemed to him that only the young people were dying anymore.

As he'd listened for some words of wisdom in the minister's fumbblings, Evan had thought about Monk Simon, an old friend who had left town with a broken heart, going to Hollywood with dreams of playing private detectives in the movies. But recent legend had it that Monk killed himself in a boarding house just months ago. For years Evan had pictured Monk lounging around swimming pools, sipping wine from hand-blown glass, wearing silver rimmed sunglasses and his hair slicked back as he leaned against vine-coiled columns. But now he could only picture Monk as Whitey had looked in the casket — a sunken face, his eyes forced shut, his lips manipulated to express content. Before the funeral Evan had stared at Whitey's face as he stared at the faces of dead men on the movie screen, watching for the actors to flinch.

To redirect his thoughts, Evan swept his shaking fingers through the pages of the hymnbook, watching the black dots connect and create soundless music. And the music made him think of the woman he'd been finding some comfort with lately — the waitress at the poolhall who seemed to wear her needs and frustrations like perfume. As he had rifled through the hymnbook, he'd made himself see her, hear the mellows of her voice, and his stomach had eased.

Everyone stepped out onto the lawn the service was over, preparing to

move on to the cemetery. Evan took off his jacket and tried to loosen his tie, but only pulled the knot tighter and further from his neck. Though the sun had gotten hotter, the breezes were still cool and they blew his sweat-soaked shirt on and off his back, sending chills across his skin.

He decided to go on home where he could change into a pair of baggy, thinning trousers and a vacation shirt, like those Harry Truman wore, shirts with large, unfamiliar flowers or brightly feathered, stilt-legged birds. Evan had one with many small palm trees and variously positioned monkeys, and whenever he wore it and he would speak to people, he'd notice how their eyes would drop to the design and would bounce from monkey to monkey, as though they were reading a comic strip.

After he crossed the road he noticed Fay Jean Cooper coming toward him, her youngest grandson at her side. She smiled briefly at him, breathing heavily and sweating, as though about to smother beneath her fat. Every year, the day it started getting warmer, Fay Jean would look about to collapse and Evan would wonder if she'd live to see another September.

"How was that funeral?" she asked, wiping sweat away with a ratted pink handkerchief. Her hands were as dark and creased and as tough-looking as leather gloves. "The family doing all right?"

"I guess," Evan said, glancing back toward the church. "I mean, I don't know, they just kind of left."

"Well, anyway," Fay Jean said. "If you're going on home, would you mind walking a ways with Louie? You don't have to take him all the way to the house, he'll know the way from your place." Fay Jean lived about a quarter mile from Evan. "I have a few more errands to run." Evan nodded and Fay Jean turned away. "Well, all right," she said. Fay Jean rarely

“Whitey McKeelen back there, he died a boy, just a boy, he never did nothing in his life. Never even was married, doesn't have a child with his name, no one to grow up with and ask questions about him.”

said goodbye, just 'all right.'

Evan and Louie sauntered down the road lined with houses, then storefronts, then trees. Louie carried on a conversation of his own, occasionally breaking out into song, off-key, sometimes making up the words or even the tune. He sang about the rocks in the road, about squishing bugs, about a stick of cinnamon gum he had in his pocket. Evan wasn't really listening, but the singing, the tune, made him think of the morose-eyed woman again — the waitress who drank tomato in her beer and who chewed at sticks of black licorice. Evan stopped a second to light a cigarette. Louie stopped too, mid-song, and looked up at him.

"Why do you smoke them cigarettes?" he asked Evan when they resumed walking. "They don't taste good, do they? Do they taste good?"

Evan sighed and shrugged his shoulders.

Louie found a small, grease-stained paper sack along the road. he picked it up and held it open, then clutched the top of it closed with both hands. "You stay in there, you nasty wind," he said, holding the bag up in front of his face. "You been bothering me all day. You just stay in there."

"You ever been to a funeral before?" Evan suddenly asked, not looking down at Louie.

"Maybe." "What do you mean, Maybe?" "Well, I don't know what one is," Louie said. "What a funeral is."

"Well... when you die... do you know what it means to die?"

"My grandpa died. Before I was born."

"No, I guess not," Louie said. He looked up at Evan with a squint. "You expecting to die, or something?"

"No," Evan answered immediately, with a laugh. "I was just talking about... just asking... shit, never mind." He laughed again. "Never mind." He reached down and patted at Louie's back, then gripped his shoulder. "Guess you don't know everything yet, do you? You don't got it all figured out."

Louis slowly crumpled up the paper bag and sneered. "I know I ain't never going to smoke cigarettes 'cause smoke tastes like dirt."

Evan slowly nodded and let go of Louie's shoulder. He patted him on the back again, sighed, then brushed ashes from his jacket.

**High Heel & The Sneakers**  
**FRIDAY APRIL 19**  
**ELMS BALLROOM**  
**SYRACUSE**  
 (30 easy miles east of Lincoln on Highway 2)

**75¢**  
**WELL DRINKS**  
 8 - 10 p.m.  
 All ages welcome.  
 Doors open at 8 p.m.

**Celebrate**  
**Earth Day**  
**April 22**  
 Then see next week's  
**"Green" Diversions**

**YOU STILL HAVE TIME!**

**1991 SUMMER READING COURSE PROGRAM**  
**Registration ends Friday, May 10, 1991 at 4:30 p.m.**

Space still available in Classics, English, Geology, History, Human Development, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology courses.

In person at the Division of Continuing Studies, Registration Office, Room 271, 33rd and Holdrege Streets Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

By Mail: Division of Continuing Studies Registration Office—Rm 271 Nebraska Center 33rd and Holdrege Streets Lincoln, NE 68583-0900

For details, call **472-1392**

UNL is a nondiscriminatory institution.

Bud Light  
 Presents:  
**SIGMA CHI**  
**FIGHT NIGHT**

**FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 1991**  
**4-H BUILDING**  
**STATE FAIRGROUNDS**

**Tickets on sale now .**  
 Available at the NE Union for \$3.50 or at the door for \$4.