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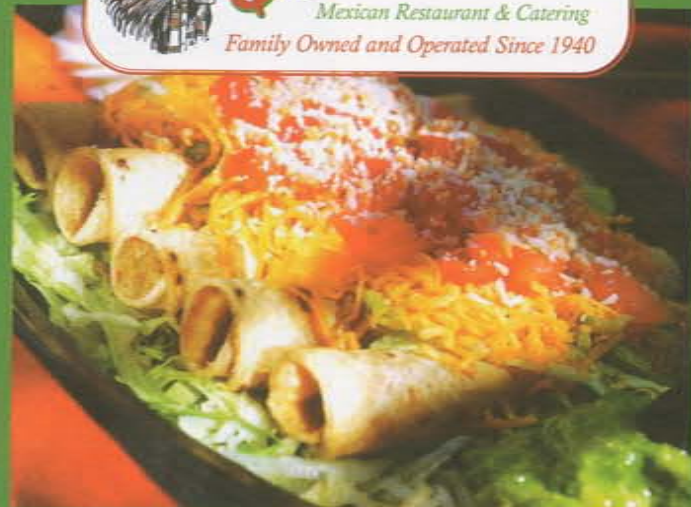
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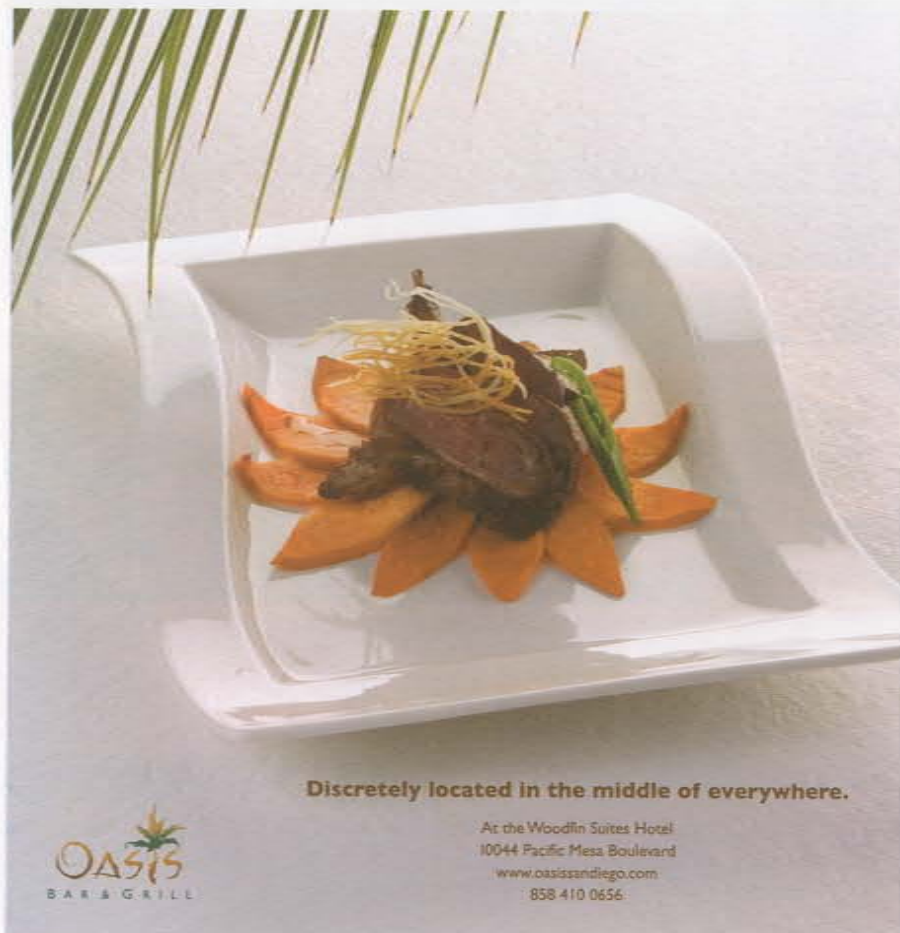
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FORGIVING TOM WOLFE

did some things that just weren't... he wasn't right in the head. That, and he had a mean side."

Rakestraw was an orphan, adopted and raised by a professor at UCSD. His brother is rumored to have been, like the adoptive father, a straight arrow, making Meda a polar foil and the black sheep of the family. He fell into a raucous beach crowd, went into the merchant marine after La Jolla High, which, one legend holds, is where he picked up his nickname—a bastardization of the exclamation used by Portuguese sailors, "Mira! Mira!" (Look! Look!)—and became an icon of the pranksterish Southern California beach culture immortalized in the movie *Big Wednesday*. Though he enjoyed a strong, fraternal connection with Macpherson—one gets the sense Mac was more family to Meda than the man's relatives—the two were more different than alike.

Behind the hard-drinking, Scottish genes and a lifelong affiliation with spirits, there was an adventuresome spirit in Macpherson that had to be where the action was—even if that meant just two hours of sleep before a 10- or 12-hour workday. Rakestraw, on the other hand, seemed to be driven by an atavistic need to create havoc; to raise the stakes and push the limits; to destroy. The men found common ground in beer parties and a love for the thrill and laughter of risky behavior, which they cultivated into both a decades-long friendship and a joke-turned-underground society that had the La Jolla cops scratching their heads through most of the 1960s.

"The recorder's stopped, right?" a source asks.

"Yes," the writer says.

"Rakestraw could be a real asshole—he was never too nice to me. And he did crazy stuff, stuff that crossed the line. Like he'd go down to the supermarket and buy a dozen frozen dinners, take them home and peel the covering off. Then he'd take the meat out, [defecate] in it, package it back up and return it to the store."

With a larger-than-life character like Rakestraw—a man who comes across

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as a combination of Bluto, the character played by John Belushi in *Animal House*, and Leroy "The Masochist" from *Big Wednesday*—one wonders where fact ends and legend begins. Doug Moranville, an old Macpherson friend, claims Rakestraw shot an anti-tank gun off the La Jolla cliffs into the Pacific one day and nearly hit a fishing boat. Others have him shooting the weapon down La Jolla Boulevard. And Lindy Brower claims the man once rolled a bomb through the middle of town, trying to blow up a building.

Albert, on the other hand, was as real as flesh and blood. The 400-pound president of the Mac Meda Destruction Company was a gorilla at the San Diego Zoo. Rakestraw was infatuated with the beast and is said to have spent many an afternoon with it, trading gazes and grunts from opposite sides of the bars. He even looked like the thing—short, stocky and strong—according to Brower. Mac Meda adopted the gorilla's visage for its T-shirts and gave him a listing in the La Jolla phone book.

A beer is peeled open, film slides into a 16-millimeter motion camera, and the Mac Meda Destruction crew is ready to roll. Half a dozen young men, fully decked out in Nazi regalia—relics and trophies of WWII, purloined from fathers' closets and thrift stores—finish off beers before lying down on the Flexi Flyers that will take them to Windansea. Imagine the looks on the faces of people who catch glimpses of these tan, wavy-hair young men whisking by in a mind-blowing blur of Third-Reich absurdity, just 20 years after the Nuremberg Trials.

The Mac Meda crew wasn't anti-Semitic, racist or xenophobic. As Wolfe indicated (and here's an instance where he got it right), the group just wanted to get a rise out of people, to bug the establishment and have a laugh. Why play with such a loaded symbol? *Exactly... why not?* No social institution was too sacred to be mocked, no taboo deemed off-limits. This was, after all, a population of young people born and raised within earshot of the eternal power, mysti-

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