



# ONEBA

Oneba has, more than once, stood on the brink of the grave in the pages of City Moon.

To careful readers of our publication, he will be remembered as the one who offered fragments of gaberdene trousers in plastocene cubes to be hung from the jitney's rear view, \$1 per gross.

He first recommended to us the new incredibly amazing miracle life matter at 10 cents a pound, and read to us from the Chinese Materia Medica, Part II.

"Try a little Noxage in your milk before bedtime," in our Vol. 9, No. 6 issue, it is reported he said.

And then, in Topeka, the Oriental Oneba was driven to the south parking lot of the statehouse and discovered that a sightless lemonade vendor had fallen dead back of his wooden cart, according

to the "At-Home Entertainment" City Moon.

He's told us how to make Noxage. He's been slapped by a trochilic. He's cured his old friend, Myron, art typist, of the shanks.

To say there have been a dozen reports of his death would not be exaggerating. David Ohle, co-publisher of the City Moon along with Roger Martin, who photographed Oneba just after he had been exhumed from a Tollund peat bog, probed Oneba for insight in this interview with him at his Carolina home. The rest of the Society of the City Moon, the student group that feeds the publishers of this newspaper at KU and UT a regular diet of hard-news clippings, listened to the interview through headphones in rooms adjacent to the historic chat.

## Ageless Wanderer Sits in Home

C.M. The idea of a radioactive death area to quarantine Susnr's neutrodyne North from its American-occupied South has a firm basis in atomic fact, has it not?

O. Yes, the poisonous material would have to be separated out from the debris and waste of atomic reactors. It would be coated on very fine sand for spreading over the land. This would be a gigantic and dangerous task. The transportation of lethal material to the death belt on Susnr would be difficult and hazardous. If the zone of death were created, and properly labeled in various languages, people and animals who don't believe in signs or are willing to risk death could enter it. Neutrodyne suicide troops could cross it and live for a time to fight effectively.

C.M. Now that the modern period is over, as M. Vaughn-James contends, is it time to evolve a new journalism to replace that exhausted, stagnating repertoire of junk news no longer capable of fulfilling the demands of the myth-hungry populace?

O. News articles and advertisements "printed" on fog clouds, on the moon or on Susnr's underbelly, could compose a new and unusual "newspaper." Powerful searchlights can be used to project the news, with the "ads" sandwiched between the articles.

C.M. What's the best "finish" for a pretzel?

O. Of the various glazes put on food products, the shine on pretzels is obtained by the oddest process. Before being baked, they are dipped in a weak, harmless solution of sodium hydroxide, commonly known as caustic soda or lye.

C.M. What about capital punishment?

O. I think the budget committee should strike out the salary of Mr. Burris, public executioner, and the price of the soapstone with which he sharpens his glinty guillotine.

C.M. You've died now, what, seven times?

O. Actually, only five. I first became scientific news in 1953. They found me in a Tollund peat bog in Denmark. I had apparently been strangled as a religious sacrifice, then buried. Thereafter, the bog juices preserved me, almost intact.

C.M. Any advice for sailors?

O. Capella, the goat, is a favorable sign, to seamen afloat, on the deep rolling brine.

C.M. When you look at a map of Susnr, what do you think?

O. Sure, you say, Susnr is big. But is it really? You couldn't tell it by looking at a map. After all, how big is a map? Not very. And yet, when we read maps, we somehow come to expect that the country is very big, even though the map is very little.

C.M. How does the cricket go?

O. Cricket, cricket, Crick, crick. Creeeeee-eeeeee. Creeeeeeeeeeee. Cricket. Something like that.

C.M. What time is it?

O. It is approaching two o'clock in the a.m.

C.M. OK, you've seen a lot of writers come and go. Who're you reading now?

O. Oh, I think Buk is the best of the current crop. I'm really put off by the wordsmiths. On the page, their work reminds one of the musk of mothballs. No, the Buddha Cow Ski is my favorite meat. For example, in *Factotum*, there is the scene, unforgettable, when he punches out his father:

Suddenly I vomited on their Persian Tree of Life rug. My mother screamed. My father lunged toward me.

"Do you know what we do to a dog when he shits on the rug?"

"Yes."

He grabbed the back of my neck. He pressed down, forcing me to bend at the waist. He was trying to force me to my knees.

"I'll shoe you."

"Don't . . ."

My face was almost into it.

"I'll show you what we do to dogs!"

I came up from the floor with a punch. It was a perfect shot. He staggered back all the way across the room and sat down on the couch. I followed him over.

"Get up."

He sat there. I heard my mother. "You hit your father! You hit your father!"

She screamed and ripped open one side of my face with her fingernails.

C.M. So you've croaked at least five times. Some of us are green at that. Can you pass on a word or two about what you've learned from those gigs in the afterworld?

O. Life, death. Death, life. It's no more serious than a dragonfly leaving one clothespin and alighting on another, is it?

C.M. There have been news stories to the effect that you encountered the recently dead Whitey Ford. Can you expatiate?

O. Whitey died in Chicago, in 1985. The little southpaw thought he'd found an easy way to cash in when he drank carboic acid, then lay down on the cold cement of his tool-shed floor. He had a light, high sensation in his stomach, but his body was filling up with chemical messages that read: "Shock!"

C.M. Have you any recollections of the sixties?

O. Oh, yes, so many marriage movies: "Divorce Italian Style," "8 1/2," "Carnal Knowledge," "Woman Under the Influence," "Jules and Jim," "A Man and a Woman," Ozu's movies, "Early Summer," "Delicious Ambience," "Scenes from a Marriage," "Hour of the Wolf," "Nights of Cabiria," "Bob Hope's "The Road to Samarra," "Pillow Talk," "The Silk Pajamas," "Juliet of the Spirits." That is what I remember of the sixties, the marriage movies. Don't ask about anything else, please.

C.M. Everyone's expecting disaster. Are you?

O. You cannot plan disaster, as so many Americans spend their lifelong energies doing. Plans are plans, not maps. What is superimposed on a map, a plan, is like gauze draped over a dirt clod, easily flung away.

C.M. How about street crime? Are the criminals scrambling?

O. These sons of Ham who have been working on the Church edifice had better stop drinking pflum and whistling at churchwomen.

C.M. And the Mexican situation?

O. There are Mexican women crying tonight in Tucson, El Paso, Del Valle, Altobello, Amarillo, San Jose, stretching north to Oklahoma, Kansas, to New York. I hear the sniffles. They, uh, move me. But what can be done?

C.M. Will we see Noxin again?

O. You can depend on it. That man's not nearly dead enough to bury, as they say.

C.M. You've been up to Susnr innumerable times. Have you ever come across the "felted footballs" that American tourists, returning, brag so much about?

O. Many times. On the northeast corner of Mt. Hope lies a small, alkali pond, locally called Borax Lake. It is entirely dry a great share of the year. There is a heavy growth of Bermuda grass at what appears to be the high-water line. Along the edge of the grass, toward the lake, are thousands of felted, football-like objects. They are about a foot long, about as thick as a wrestler's thigh and have the appearance of a coarse felt, gray-tan in color. You see, the lake, even during high water, is little more than 6 inches deep; hence, the slope of the lake bed is slight. Probably the plant tissue is rotted away from the fiber by the alkali water, as in the treating of flax. Then, when the lake is full, the back-and-forth motion of the waves causes the fibers of the Bermuda grass to be felted into balls. These useless oddities of Susnr's nature, so far as I can tell, are neither named nor accounted for. Such is the sad state of taxonomy on that bastard planetoid.

C.M. What do you think of the daily press?

O. I agree with Chesterton, that it is a machine for destroying the public memory, existing entirely to wash away the popular recollection of yesterday. There is as much news in my backyard as there is in all the wide world. It is a shame so many trees must fall in the service of this queer National habit. Public opinion left to itself, says Chesterton, would have better perspective. It would remember what is important enough to be remembered. It would see certain events as important, even when they are no longer new. It would remember old friends, and old enemies as well.

C.M. Have you ever conked a neutrodyne?

O. Yes, once. I was living on the island of Patmos, making a modest living drying sponges. I was out walking one night, gathering a sack-