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voice their opinions politically. Leo doesn't see it as every musician's responsibility to speak out, but wouldn't have it any other way himself.

"For me I feel that it is. It just kind of comes with the territory. You know, there's a line that people draw between keeping it safe in your little packaged form of art, whether that's a song or a painting, and actually breaking down that wall and stepping out and saying something in plain English," he says.

Leo is slightly worried that people might think getting Bush out of office would solve all of America's problems. "Without getting on a high horse here, I don't have a lot of patience for people who only get enraged during a Republican presidency. When the media, other bands, and fans started paying attention to politics during the Bush administration, I started to get asked a lot about my own political views and I was like, 'Dude, I haven't written a non-political song in 20 years.' There's always something to write about. There're always punk musicians writing about it."

Fans of Ted Leo and The Pharmacists can sleep easy knowing that the group is busy penning a follow-up to Shake the Sheets. As for content, Leo says Bush's reelection a month after Shake the Sheets' release has played a role in the songwriting process. "What I'm a little nervous about is that I wind up writing about being really tired. I think that's because I am just really tired. I feel like I kind of expended myself. I don't want to keep saying things over and over again. I wish the world could take a big vacation for a week, and we can get back to the fighting after that."

For more information, check out www.tedleo.com.

Welcome to the club

CAROL'S FATHER'S TRUCK

by Stephanie Yorke

When Annette first returned to Wilston, her mother toted her everywhere.

"This is my daughter. She once came to church here. She's a university student."

The church lady smiled. "What are you studying?" Annette pulled out her top hat and began the song and dance.

Encore: "Aunt Freida, do you remember Annette?"

"That's a wonderful brooch. How much? This is my daughter Annette."

"My tank is on the driver's side? Sorry! Annette is in university."

So, unlike her friends, Annette was not allowed to play dead in her hometown. The alert was up, and Wilston would not let her be. Wednesday, after she'd finished a bread-kneading shift at the bakery, Annette found an e-mail that her mother had stuck to the fridge.

Hi Marla:
I'm going to ask you for a favor, sorry. Tony's troop is fundraising Saturday. Could Annette help?

Thx,
Janelle

Annette was alone, so she told Janelle to piss off. She then took two snack-sized yoghurts from the refrigerator, peeled back the tops, and licked off the curdled yoghurt film. Annette dug for a spoon. The noise was enough to draw her mother.

Mother of Annette: "Can you confirm Saturday?"

Saturday confirmed itself by heaving compliant little Friday out of the way. Annette parked

the car in front of the drugstore. The fundraiser was a sidewalk barbeque, and she was 20 minutes late.

Five small boys were waiting on a portable cooler. The boys wore hats with felt tails. They wore fancy neckerchiefs, embroidered sashes, and other degrading insignia. The barbeque was unlit, and the pop hadn't been iced. The boys were unsupervised except for a box of Snackwell cookies that someone's mother had sent.

Judas Priest, who's the adult here? "Where's Tony?"

"He told us a lady was doing it."

With a cranial explosion, Annette realized: she was the adult. It was as if a haywire chickadee had smashed into the pane of her self-concept. She was not supervised. She was the supervisor. She'd finally been accepted into the big 'woman' sorority club. She'd made it through hazing. She'd been given a sweater that said 'phi-beta-lady' on the front.

"Take it back! Take it back!"

"What, Miss Net?"

"The cooler. Take it back a little further - I don't want the barbie to melt all the ice."

Four of the boys heaved the cooler while one banged on the top. He was singing about a peanut that he'd found.

Annette played with the barbeque lighter; then, she opened the barbeque, looking for the wick. It didn't have one. She looked at the boys.

"Have you ever watched your father do this? Or your mother?"

Their hats were all askew, and they looked like one-eared beagles.

Annette: "In camp, did they teach you about fires?"

"We need waterproof matches."

"We need an escape route."

"We need to use newspaper and put a stick tent on top."

Eventually, a grandmotherly bystander intervened, lighting the barbeque. She'd been in the drugstore getting a refill of her epilepsy pills, which meant the most to her at times like this.

Annette slit open the package of pre-cooked sausages, and then hung the price-board. She arranged condiments on the shelf of the barbeque. Then, they began. Between nine and ten in the morning, the boys sold seven barbequed sausages. However, after they had all used their lunch money, business slowed.

By eleven o'clock, the boys had gotten tired of going to the bathroom in tag-teams. They were also tired of singing about peanuts and bears. They wanted to sell some sausages. Annette looked at each adult who walked by as if she were offering them bone marrow; she was worried that she might fail the fundraiser test, and lose her membership in the woman sorority. She had started to like it.

At 11:11, Carol pulled up in her father's truck. The truck was full of boys. They wore cleats and had feral hair cuts. Soccer players. Soccer players in the cab of the truck. Soccer players in the hitch. Right wing, left wing, forward, defense, bench ducks, hell - even the goalie.

Carol: "Hey. Your mom said you were doing a barbeque. I picked up my brother's soccer practice."

Annette's barbeque netted one hundred and ninety-five dollars. However, the beagle-boys reported to their troop leader that Annette's friends did not wear seatbelts. Tony thanked her, but she was not invited to help again.

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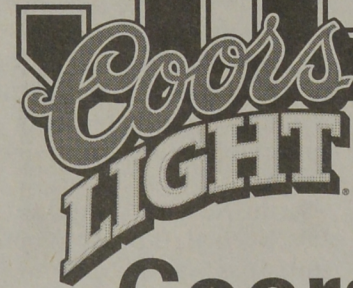
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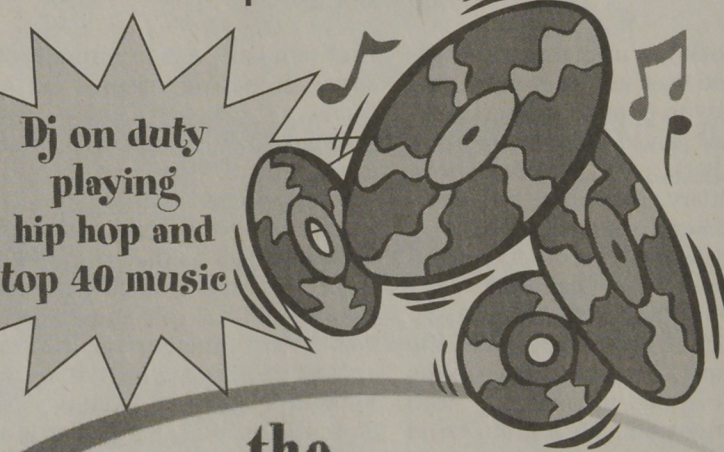
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