Groundhog's Day was suprisingly warm and I was greeted with the funky rotten sneaker smell of spring as I went out onto the roof where I'd been working at my "Skunder-like" "McKinsey stools". I sat down on my stool and looked out over the Harlem roof tops. Pigeons that somebody kept on the roof that had made it through the worst part of winter cooed in their coops. Friends, if you have read this far, you realize that when a liar gets carried away with his lie, he must get caught. There is no way that I can continue with the intolerable burden of trying to pretend that I'm a New York Negro with roots in Alabama when actually I'm a Newark, New Jersey Negro with roots in Tennessee. But I'm not, after outlining a picture, and returning to the drawing to fill in with color, to fill in the sketchy settings and half-developed characters portrayed in this magabook. You know that's not the style of a New Jersey Negro or a Tennessee Negro. But if you want to, you can go back thru this magabook and change the whole scene to Newark and change Paulina Survey and Arthur Goodly to Ralph McSwill and Boss Gump. But I do want you to have before you additional information and images which might help you piece together or to discover some sort of pattern emerging from this too brief snapshot that I'm taking too long to capture. But there are additional complexities and subtleties that I don't want to miss.

Some of you may wonder why I've placed so many devils in this work. But if you only think you will realize that the natural function of devils is to keep people running around in circles of despair, anger and terror. But as Descartes pointed out, machines much more complicated than circles (wheels) can be constructed and I understand that the most complicated evil-machine found about these days can be broken down into the simple terms of: it's them or us. For example, when the pigeons were all put out of action because their wings got singed in the last riot, both Mack Foster and Reverend Bradly came up with how messages could be sent out of Harlem. The similarity between their plans was that they both thought up placing miniature tv cameras in the pigeon's bands. However, Bradly, having more chicken in him than a little bit, wouldn't trust his pigeons flying anywhere but straight from his roof-tip coop to the coop on top of the police station downtown. Therefore, his pigeons' cameras only picked up other of his own pigeons and some bird's eye views of the city. But Foster, being somewhat of an intellectual, decided to extend a bit of false freedom to his pigeons and let them fly anywhere they wanted to fly. They sat down on roof tops, gutters, under cars, on window sills, and everywhere pigeons ordinarily sit. You can guess at the difference in quality of the two types of pigeons. The trouble with Foster's plan, the city found after spending Thirty-Thousand on it, was that quite often the "free" pigeons would wander off into some totally unrelated area like the baseball park or would lose an expensive tv camera during a fight in a gutter over peanuts. Unhappily for the pigeons, they too were regarded as socially unfit "laggards" and were sexually isolated. The "straight" pigeons were kept in

separate coops, one for male and the other for female, dormitory style. When an accident occurred and there was some co-educational sleeping, squab appeared on Reverend Bradly's table. The children of the "free" pigeons either starved to death, died of some horrible disease or were shot on sight or leaped upon by cats. Some few however, grew to be strong and straight. Rev. Bradly opened an office on the block, but I didn't go near it mainly because of its ugly, big, heavy tables and metal chairs. The place wasn't well lighted and there was no thought at all given to wall color. I would have been sick after two minutes in the place.

I hope I didn't give you a wrong impression of my father. He, like all my uncles, including Uncle Conklin, the medicine man who invented Conklin's ointment, were and are country gentlemen. He can grow anything that has roots in the soil or walks on feet. And like Uncle Conklin, he wears garters, spats and double-breasted pin-striped suits with a vest. He smoked a good cigar. My momma, his wife, only left home to go to work at white folks' homes and to go to church on Sunday. Other than running a respectable gambling game on the weekends they lived a quiet life in the apartment filled with china, old tintypes of our ancestors and prints white folks had given them; thrown off for more modern drawings. Mom kept the china in a special cabinet and I was instilled with so much fear concerning those plates to this day I hesitate to examine them although I'm deep into a related line of business. The plates we ate off were kept in a cupboard where every plate, glass and cup was to be found in the same place year to year. I wouldn't dare to try to sneak into the china closet for one distracting domestic quality of mother was that just as my father could walk onto an open field he'd been working and tell how many people had walked on it since he saw it last, my mother could walk into a room she'd cleaned and tell just about what went on in the room while she was gone. The pictures in the frames on the walls were in the style of Audubon, the first American painter, and were filled with birds in their natural environment. We can only realize how profound was Audubon's rebellion from the art of the XVIIIth century America--art looking toward a dim European past (a past without color) when we realize paintings in his style hang in many black homes or are at least freshly planted in a trunk. When he'd been released from debtor's prison with nothing in his possession other than his drawings of birds and was forced to sell them for a living, did he know of the African tradition of animal stories and not representing the human forms? Certainly, as a Creole who may or may not have had some black blood himself but who must have run up against many black people in his native Santo Domingo before his family was expelled by Toussaint's revolution, he must have felt these influences in his bones when he "flunked out" the studio of Jacques Louis David and spoke against the Dutch manner of painting animals. Or was he merely a snot-nosed French man thumbing his nose at Rubens and Rembrandt? But today I see the birds under the gun in the painting of Harnett and Connie Dixon of Jackson, Mississippi.

So much for this "iffy" discussion of capitalization of symbols. On the other hand, I'm afraid I've not stressed strongly enough the total devaluation of symbols that's taking place. The idea that Otto, the winos and me talked about out in front of the library, was picked up by a camera pigeon and has appeared on tv in the form of a commercial about a guy who's down and takes a Lifebuoy break and lathers up singing in the shower. I've seen the President singing "We Shall Overcome". I've seen the teachers of the nation tell little girls the thing between their legs is a precious gift, making who'es of them. I've seen integration and death sold in the mass media as a public service. I have seen policemen become the great lovers of the day on the boob tube and gigaloos and pimps join the force and drive to meet their women in deuce-and-a-quarter squad cars.

Just a few of the jobs I wouldn't take that came up at LAY (Lovely & Young Advertisers) during those vulgar sixties were: ads against the public outcry that was going to come up when the cars on the assembly line hit the market several months later and the steering columns collapsed; ads for pills and ads to combat the charges of the Food and Drug people that they caused cancer whenever the charges might come up; an ad which stated: Bungler's Apple Pie is love, truth and beauty with a little cinnamon spice added. So in the industry I soon became known as the "virgin" and one day I heard a vice president tell a salesman behind my back, "There ain't too many virgins left. The moon god is hungry. We should sacrifice him on the first full moon."

Those were days of credit gone wild. My father had always taught me credit was something shameful. I was always embarassed about the book the corner grocer kept on us. But one day my cousin Wesley offed a credit card from the company and took a trip around the world. When he returned he filled the apartment up with mod modern furniture. I was horrified we'd be locked under the jail and the key thrown away, but when the boss found out he congratulated Wesley on joining the pepsi jet generation. Then I got a credit card and took out a subscription to National Geographic magazine. Yes, I've come a long ways from the days when the rental people took the tv out from under Otto and me's nose while we was watching the last show in the series, "Run for Your Life". I suppose the good guys won, huh? And I hocked my lousy typewriter which would only type one line and then need a major repair job. I had it repaired for five dollars and hocked it for ten. Luckily the man in the pawn shop only tried typing one line when he tested it. There was no fraud. I didn't promise the thing could type more than one line.

I didn't tell you everything my dog and I discussed because I didn't want to hurt his feelings, but with the good weather and all he's no doubt in the woods and wild fields where the brooks are bubbling and the beautiful red and black skunk weed is poking up from the dead matted leaves or perhaps he's gone into the hills of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the few rocky acres we once scratched a living from and is walking along the warm furrowed ground of yesterday. You