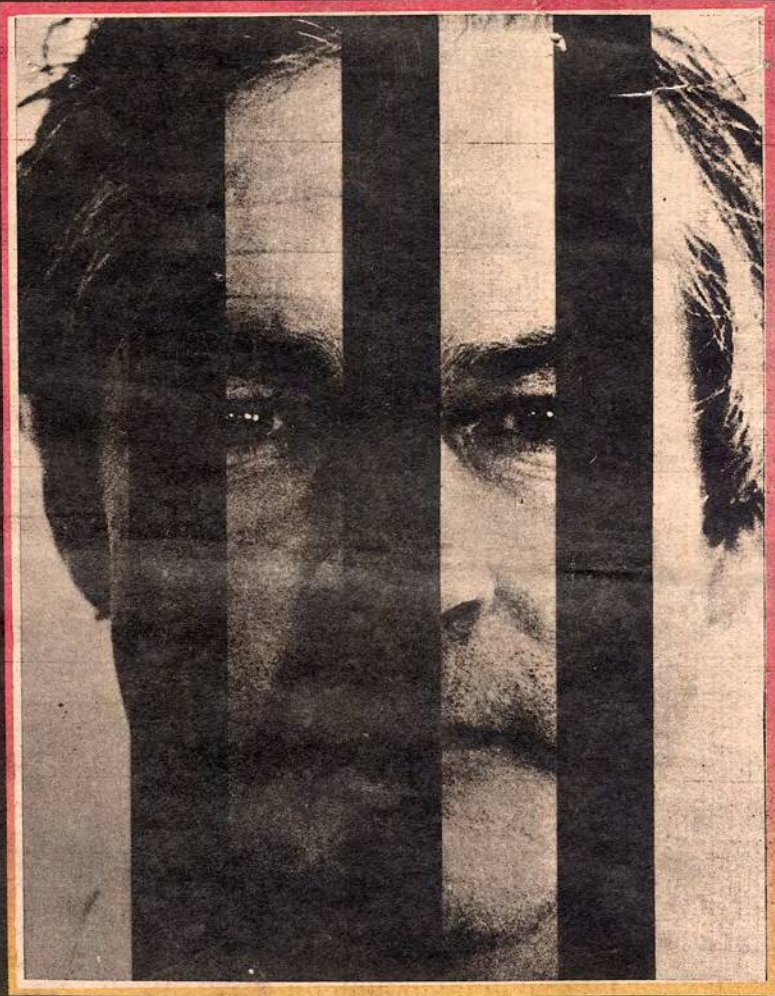


# J. BALDWIN INTERVIEW

# THE east village ONE

VOLUME FIVE NUMBER FIFTEEN MARCH SEVENTEEN METROPOLITAN 25¢ NATIONAL 35¢

## LEARY KIDNAPPED



RANSOM  
\$100000

RANSOM  
\$100000

On March 2nd, in Houston, Texas, Timothy Leary was convicted for the second time of being in possession of less than one-half ounce of marijuana, and sentenced to 10 years in prison and denied bail pending appeal on the grounds "that if he were at large, he would be a danger to other persons in the community, and for having openly advocated violation of laws he poses a menace to the community." The sentence was handed down by Judge Connely, the same judge who 4 years ago sentenced Leary to four years in jail and a \$10,000 fine for the same offense, a decision that has been reversed by an 8-0 vote in the Supreme Court.

In April, Tim will be on trial in Poughkeepsie, New York on 9 misdemeanor counts stemming from an armed vigilante raid on the League for Spiritual Discovery Headquarters in Millbrook.

The I Ching says "Holding together brings good fortune," so contribute whatever you can to Holding Together, a Freedom Fund, P.O. Box 5017, Berkeley, California.

比

John Lennon  
Yoko Ono Lennon  
Allen Ginsberg  
Terence (Kayo) Hallinan  
James Coburn

# THE STREET STORY

by RAY SCHULTZ

For three weeks in the summer of 1968 I noticed a blind kid sitting on the corner of Eighth Street and Sixth Avenue, holding a sign that said "I am blind—please help me recover my stolen clarinet." He was dressed in rags, obviously hadn't shaved in several months, and

wore a small tin cup around his neck for taking in the coin. I passed him several times and one sunny afternoon when the opportunity presented itself I crouched next to him on the sidewalk and asked if we could talk. He seemed very surprised but he remained cool. His face

was dirty, and his vacant eyes were bloodshot like a roadmap. "You eaten yet?" I asked. "Yes." "How did you lose your clarinet?" "Man, I don't know." "I'm a writer," I said. "I have

a paper. Maybe we could do a story on you, help you get a new clarinet. Want to have a cup of coffee and talk about it?" "I don't think so. If I take five minutes off from here, I'll lose money."

"What time do you finish?" "I don't know." "Can we talk here?" I asked. "I don't think so. It wouldn't be very good." "Why not?" "It just wouldn't. I don't want to talk about it, anyway. I have to make some money."

"Okay," I said, then I got up and put a dollar in his cup.

"Thanks," he said. I walked about thirty feet when two heavysset individuals stopped me looking like they meant business.

"Why did you give that kid a dollar?"

"Why did I what?"

"Why did you give that kid a dollar? You a humanitarian?"

"What do you care?"

"I care. You a humanitarian or something?"

"I bet he's a cop," the other one said.

"Yeah, a philanthropist."

"My brother was blind," I said. "This really gets to me."

"He's a wiseguy, too."

"I just gave him a dollar," I said. "That's what he's sitting there for, right?"

I took advantage of the rush hour crowd and moved quickly on. I saw the kid just about every day for the next few months, begging on the corner of 14th and Second Avenue in the morning, and back to Eighth Street and Sixth in the evening. At times he seemed to get cleaner, more prosperous looking, and at times he sunk back to the same depressing state he was in the first time I met him. I stopped occasionally and exchanged a few meaningless words with him, but he usually didn't have much to say. Sometimes, I thought I saw his two friends standing around, but I never waited long enough to find out for sure.

I inquired of various people, who was he? What did he do? Did he really play the clarinet?"

"He's just blind," someone told me. "They call him 'Blind Richie.' He used to play the clarinet in the street, but he makes a living."

"How?"

"By begging. He makes thirty bucks a day. He lives on top of a restaurant, I see him all the time. He comes in at night, drops the money off with the woman, than he goes to sleep. She keeps his money for him."

"Doesn't he get ripped off?"

"Not that I know of, but I guess it would happen. He's blind you know."

Weeks went by, months, half a year. People told me he played a beautiful blues clarinet at one time, others told me he was a hustling junkie who never played the clarinet at all. Some folks told me he cleared a fortune by begging on the street, others told me he barely kept alive, never had a place to stay, and was continually being ripped off by "friends," and burned by the pushers. At different times, I heard that he was blind from birth, blind from the war, blind from wood alcohol, and blind from a sneak attack involving drugs. I didn't know what to believe. The rumors from one day to the next had him wiped-out on speed, or hooked on smack. I just knew it wasn't a good hour to be in his shoes.

In July of last year, while attending the super-righteous Newport Folk Festival, I received even more news about the young man's strange life. It was Saturday night, the vibes were good, we had listened to the Everly Brothers and their father and Doug Kershaw under the New England stars, then Joni Mitchell was introduced. She came out in a long gown and went into her string of hits, "Circle Game," "Both Sides Now," "Chelsea Morning," and "The Fiddle and the Drum." then very politely, she took the microphone and said, "There's a young man in New York City, I don't know his name, but he's blind and he sits on the street and plays his clarinet for whatever money people will give him. I've often ridden past him, and wondered about his life, and I've written this song for him, it's called 'The Boy Who Plays for Free.'"

"This is incredibly," I told the chick I was with. "I know that kid."

"It's very sad," she said.

Joni Mitchell went into her song, talking about how she felt so guilty riding in her limosine and going back to her expensive rooms when there in the street, the boy played for free for the people, sweet, innocent, righteous, beautiful. It was a charming ballad and the crowd received it enthusiastically. Then Joni Mitchel left the stage, and was followed by the B.C. Harmoniettes and the Cook County Singers Convention, two great gospel groups, and Arlo Guthrie who told an anecdote about Moses and the Pharoah, and the dope laws back in those days, then he led the crowd in "Oh, Mary don't YOU Weep," and "Amazing Grace," and everybody felt pretty good about it and gave him a standing ovation.

Less than one hour later, the chick and I attended a post-concert party at a mansion at Vernon Court College in Newport. While a group of fiddlers played some stomping

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Joseph Stevens

# THE FLOATING LOTUS IS COMING

## STREETS

(Continued from Page 7)

music in the outer hall, we lined up in the kitchen were Big Mama Thornton was serving her own special recipe for rice and beans, and chicken and all that. We were standing right behind Israel Young of the Folklore Center, and Joni Mitchell.

"Who is this kid?" Young asked.

"Oh, it's so wierd," Joni Mitchell said. "I think he's lost his clarinet. He doesn't play his clarinet any more.

"We ought to do something for him."

"I agree."

"Maybe we can get him a new clarinet."

"Yes, that would be great."

"Maybe we can get him on television or something."

"Yes."

"There must be something we

can do."

"Yes, but he's very hard to approach. He's very guarded. Sometimes it just breaks me up to think about it."

"It's a beautiful song."

"Oh, thank you."

"Yeah, there must be something we can do for that kid."

"I agree," Joni Mitchell said.

I returned to New York. It was some time before I saw "Blind Richie" again, and I was sure that Joni Mitchell had removed him off to beautiful Laurel Canyon, where they would make records, make love, make a million and split the difference, I even heard rumors to that effect. I had all-but forgotten the event and was only waiting for gross amounts of


(Continued on Page 21)



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## STREETS

Continued from Page 16)

hype when one drunken evening, coming out of the *De Ja Vu* Coffeehouse on East Tenth Street in the rain, I ran into the man, ragged, cold, hungry-looking, and all sold-out. "Spare a quarter?" he said. "I have to get a fix."

I gave him a quarter.

"How are you?" I asked.

"Fuck off," he said, and he dropped his cane. I bent over to pick it up, but he came in contact with me and tried to shove me back.

"I've got it, I've got it, he said. I'm getting it together. Fuck you."

He stumbled back into the doorway and regained his position.

"Need any help?" I asked.

"I need a quarter," he said.

"Can somebody spare a quarter? I have to get a fix."

I left him there. From then on, he seemed to work on the East Side exclusively, making Gems Spa his headquarters of sorts. Again, he had varied periods of relative prosperity, then stone poverty, but this time it all seemed a bit grungier, a bit more hopeless, a bit more disillusioning to the people who came in contact with him, not to mention what was going on in his own head. I often wondered what was going on in his own head. I gave up trying to talk to him, his reactions were getting more definitive, more violent, and I spoke to more and more people who had seen him on the street and were familiar with his lot.

"He played a great clainert," someone told me. "Absolutely great."

"He's getting beaten all the time," someone else said. "Everybody says they want to help him, and everybody fucks him over sooner or later. I think it's pretty hopeless."

"Did you hear what he said about Joni Mitchell's song?" someone else asked. "He said it was a phony, that she didn't bother to get to know him, and she should have fucked him if she wanted to write an honest song. Besides, Joni Mitchell's retired now, ain't she? Living with Graham Nash or someone?"

Blind Richie continued on the street, walking around half-crazed sometimes, getting in scraps, getting rained and snowed on. One morning two weeks or so ago I saw him try to strike a Spade with his cane.

"You motherfucker!" He screamed.

"Hey, man."

"I'll kill you!"

"Hold it!"

He dropped the cane, but still lunged in the direction he thought the spade was in, five or six people grabbed him and tried to hold him back, they'd let him

loose, he'd lunge again.

"Give me my cane!"

He dropped to his hands and knees, crawled around like a trapped animal, found the cane and got up.

"Hey man, I wasn't trying to start no shit. I'm your friend," the spade said.

He lunged in the spade's direction and they grabbed him again. He struggled violently, he cursed, howled, cried, tried to break loose, made it, swung the cane viciously in a half-circle, clearing a ten foot swath in front of him.

"You motherfucker, I'm gonna get you."

A Puerto Rican was trying to calm him down: He stole up behind him and tried to grab him but he swung the cane and it was no use.

"We're only trying to help you man," The Puerto Rican said.

"Fuck you, you dirty spic," Blind Richie said.

He swung the cane, tripped to the ground, lost the cane and crawled around for it again while a huge circle of people, black and white, watched and laughed.

"Hey listen, baby, be cool.

We're your friends."

"You ain't my friends," the kid screamed. "I GOT NO NIGGER AND SPIC FRIENDS!"

"Hey, man."

"YOU'RE ALL A BUNCH OF DUMB NIGGERS AND SPIC!! A BUNCH OF FUCKING SPOOKS!"

"Aw, now."

"Hey Richie, here I am. Come and get me."

"I'LL GET YOU!!!"

He advanced and swung the cane pathetically in that direction. They taunted him some more, they had him dancing. He staggered a bit, used the cane for support, was obviously trying to keep the circle around him as wide as possible. He shook in the cold, he didn't say anything.

"Hey man, you coming for me?"

"There he is, Richie."

"He's over there."

"No, over here!"

"Over here!"

"Here I am!"

"Niggers," Richie said. "Niggers and fucking dirty spics. I don't want no niggers or spics around here. Niggers and spics."

"Hey Richie, you see men, man?"

The crowd broke up a bit. Richie stood there shivering with his cane. He lived though, he lived to stand in the rain a few nights later and beg for change in front of Gem's Spa and talk to a girl with a suitcase who needed a place to stay, and he lived to be photographed in this position by Joe Stevens who wandered up to the scene with your present servant, and who make like a cop in his white trenchcoat. Stevens viewed the situation with a quick eye, told me "It's a cinch," then he

flashed one off, and the girl asked if it was a lightening storm. Richie smiled. He didn't see anything. He went into Gems Spa for a pack of cigarettes, carefully took some change out of his pocket and paid for them, then out to the street again where Stevens took another shot, and suddenly four or five shots were ripped off one at a time, flash! flash! flash!—and Stevens looked like the perfect ace, and I covered him from the side of the newsstand, and Richie didn't know a thing about it, never heard a word, never saw a thing, and the girl asked us what we were taking pictures of and Stevens said, very snidely,

"Of all of us."

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BEING THAT THE THROAT OF THE PEOPLE has been cut, D.A. Latimer missed his copy deadline this issue, and decided instead to draw the cartoon strip on the back cover. 'A word to the wise,' admonishes Latimer— 'the telephones downstairs in Ratner's DO TOO WORK!'

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