

SIDETRIPPING IN AMERICA

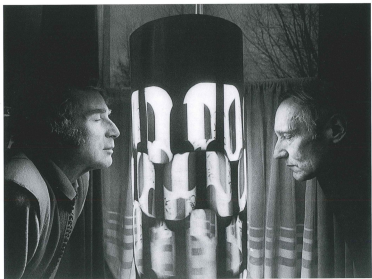
In the summer of 1966, with \$300 and a battered Leica camera, I moved to New York City. I was 23 and had been photographing seriously for two years. Bored with my graduate studies in Anthropology at the University of Missouri, I craved instead the outer limits of real-life experience. I knew New York was a rich behavioral stew, and I was starving for a taste of the radical behaviors that were changing (and polarizing) America. Yum!

I quickly found a photo assistant job in Greenwich Village (\$75/week) and a tub-in-the-kitchen apartment on the Lower East Side (\$52/month). When a second-hand enlarger and trays of chemicals filled my tiny bedroom, I slept on a cot in the kitchen: stink of cockroach spray, oven gas for heat...

Soon I found a nicer pad and began freelancing. I photographed regularly for the *Manhattan Tribune*, a West Side weekly, and the *Trib* rewarded me with a much-coveted Police Press Card. I also shot various assignments for *Time* magazine, the *New York Times*, and the brand-new *Rolling Stone*. For my personal work, I preferred strange, edgy subjects: naked beer hippies, sadistic cops, hollow-eyed strippers, preening transvestites, punks, drunks, weenie-waggers, militant Jesus freaks and dope-crazed protesters. Yippie!

1970: Mardi Gras in New Orleans. Sleeping in a friend's dented Volkswagon, washing up in the Greyhound Bus Station. Wild! Fueled by the mad crowd energy (and by Dixie beer) I joined the intoxicating dance, often as drunk as my crazy costumed subjects, dragging my poor tired ass up and down Bourbon Street one more time, cameras ready, up and down, up and down, in search of *one more shot*...

I remember laughing aloud as I developed the endless rolls of Mardi Gras film. Wow! There were weird-as-fuck the-dream-is-over pictures that synched well with my gritty New York images. I had hit a groove. I called my book-in-progress *SIDETRIPPING*.



In 1975 writer Robert Palmer asked me to fly with him to England to photograph William S. Burroughs for a *Rolling Stone* cover story. WHOOPIE! I was thrilled beyond words to meet and hang out with the amazing Burroughs. A few years earlier I'd been a backward hillbilly boy from Nowhere, Missouri. Now I was in London, smoking opiated hash with Old Bull Lee and staring into the magical Dream Machine with Brion "Rub Out the Word" Gysin. My head was spinning—and I ascended straight to HEAVEN when Burroughs examined my book dummy and agreed to provide text!

Back in New York, I showed *SIDETRIPPING* to every adventuresome publisher in sight. There were some enthusiastic nibbles and cautious half-promises—yet years passed without an offer. Finally in 1975 maverick publisher Richard Kasak said yes—and my whole life changed.

"*SIDETRIPPING* is for today what Robert Frank's *THE AMERICANS* was for the 50's—a satirical, hard-hitting uncannily perceptive profile," said the *Village Voice*. My phone began ringing with new assignments, teaching jobs, lectures, workshops, a film offer. At last! Meanwhile, however, my publisher moved on, the book fell out of print, and for the past 25 years *SIDETRIPPING* has been a hard-to-find collectible.

Now, thanks to Baba Ron Turner at Last Gasp, we have this handsome new edition. What a rush! What a trip! And what a hell of a time it was....

Charles Gatewood
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Sun in Scorpio 2001

Step right up for the greatest show on earth. The biologic show. Any being you ever imagined in your wildest and dirtiest dreams is here and yours for a price. The biologic price you understand money has no value here..

