

[Recollection]

## HEAD TRAUMA

*From the deposition of Samantha Feldman in Andre Shipley et al. v. The City of New York et al. Jesse Shipley, a seventeen-year-old student at Port Richmond High School in Staten Island, New York, was killed in an automobile accident in 2005. Following the incident described below, his family sued the City of New York and the Office of the New York City Medical Examiner for emotional distress and for violating their right of sepulcher; Shipley's brain was removed without his family's knowledge. George Siracuse is a lawyer representing the plaintiffs. Last November, a jury awarded the Shipley family \$1 million.*

GEORGE SIRACUSE: Were you a student at Port Richmond High School in 2004 and 2005?

SAMANTHA FELDMAN: Yes.

SIRACUSE: Did you know Jesse Shipley?

FELDMAN: Yes. We had a lunch period together.

SIRACUSE: Was he a popular young man?

FELDMAN: Yes.

SIRACUSE: Eventually you heard that he had been involved in an automobile accident, and was killed as a result of that?

FELDMAN: Yes.

SIRACUSE: Were there many students who attended the wake and the funeral?

FELDMAN: Yeah. Hundreds I'd say.

SIRACUSE: He was that popular a young man?

FELDMAN: Yeah.

SIRACUSE: After the funeral, did you receive some notice from the school about a trip to the medical examiner's office on Staten Island?

FELDMAN: Yeah. Well, I took a forensics class with Mr. Lobaito. I'd say like a month after Jesse passed away, Mr. Lobaito wanted to take us on a trip to the morgue.

SIRACUSE: Did anyone tell you that the morgue was where Jesse Shipley had been brought after the accident?

FELDMAN: I had no idea. Not until we saw the case. I think the whole case was brains. I don't know if there was any other body parts, but I know his brain was there.

SIRACUSE: How did you know it was Jesse Shipley's brain?

FELDMAN: Because on the jar it clearly said, JESSE SHIPLEY, HEAD TRAUMA.

SIRACUSE: Did anybody tell you that was a brain?

FELDMAN: Looked like a brain. I could see that through the jar.

SIRACUSE: The medical examiner said, These are brains?

FELDMAN: He told us, I'm going to show you where we receive the bodies and basically how they go through an autopsy, and just not

to get crazy, not to roam around, to be respectable and behave. He showed us a table that rolls, where they weigh the bodies when they first come in. Then he opened the freezer. He said what it was, we asked what was in it, and the kids wanted to see, so he opened it. He asked them not to take pictures, but everyone was taking pictures. Then after that he took us to the actual room where they did the autopsy. As soon as you walk into the room, say if I'm in the doorway, the case of brains or whatever was there, was right next to me, and he pointed it out. I was looking at the case and noticed it said JESSE SHIPLEY on it. Somebody pointed it out to me, and like, everyone else caught on to us pointing and looking at it and a couple of girls got really disturbed. I know there was one girl definitely crying.

SIRACUSE: Did Mr. Lobaito or the medical examiner say anything as the kids were beginning to realize that Jesse's brain was in that case?

FELDMAN: I think the first thing they said, because they realized kids had started to take out their phones to take pictures, was you guys can't take pictures, please put the phones away.

SIRACUSE: Did you take a picture?

FELDMAN: I didn't have a cell phone. I wouldn't want a picture of that anyway.

[Commissions]

## SOLO SHOW

*From descriptions of photographs and drawings requested by male prisoners at Tamms supermax prison in Illinois. The descriptions were sent to artists working with Tamms Year Ten, an organization that seeks to change conditions at the prison, where all inmates are kept in solitary confinement. The project has received forty-five submissions, and artists are currently fulfilling the requests.*

I would like to receive a real photo of the holy mosque of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. I would like the picture of the Kaaba the size of 8.5" × 11". Surely it would be a pure blessing to me if you could fulfill this request.

I would love a photograph of a woman sitting by a lake fishing, with an empty chair next to her, with a cooler of beer. And have a Harley-Davidson motorcycle in the background! I'd prefer the photographer take the photo from a boat out in the lake! Also, I'd prefer a woman that's over forty!

[Criticism]

## BEAT TO THE PUNCH

*From a July 23, 1970, letter addressed to Truman Capote by William S. Burroughs, responding to Capote's In Cold Blood. Rub Out the Words: The Letters of William S. Burroughs 1959–1974, edited by Bill Morgan, will be published this month by Ecco. It is not known whether the letter was sent.*

**M**y Dear Mr. Truman Capote,

This is not a fan letter in the usual sense—unless you refer to ceiling fans in Panama. Rather, call this a letter from “the reader”—vital statistics are not in capital letters—a selection from marginal notes on material submitted, as all “writing” is submitted to this department. I have followed your literary development from its inception, conducting on behalf of the department I represent a series of inquiries as exhaustive as your own recent investigations in the Sunflower State. Your recent appearance before a senatorial committee on which occasion you spoke in favor of continuing the present police practice of extracting confessions by denying the accused the right of consulting counsel prior to making a statement also came to my attention.

I have in line of duty read all your published work. The early work was in some respects promising—I refer particularly to the short stories. You were granted an area for psychic development. It seemed for a while as if you would make good use of this grant. You choose instead to sell out a talent that *is not yours to sell*. You have written a dull unreadable book which could have been written by any staff writer on *The New Yorker*—(an undercover reactionary periodical dedicated to the interests of vested American wealth). You have placed your services at the disposal of interests who are turning America into a police state by the simple device of deliberately fostering the conditions that give rise to criminality and then demanding increased police powers and the retention of capital punishment to deal with the situation they have created. You have betrayed and sold out the talent that was granted you by this department. That talent is now officially withdrawn. Enjoy your dirty money. You will never have anything else. You will never write another sentence above the level of *In Cold Blood*. As a writer you are finished. Over and out. Are you tracking me? Know who I am? You know me, Truman. You have known me for a long time. This is my last visit.

I had this idea for a mural where Thor, Captain America, Wolverine, Venom, Iron Man, Hulk team up with Superman, Green Arrow, Flash, and Batman against Two-Face, Joker, Magneto, Doctor Doom, Sabretooth, Kingpin, Green Goblin. A good-vs.-evil theme.

In April and May 1988, I tried out for the International Basketball Association. In the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* newspapers, there's a photo of me dribbling a basketball as well as an article about me. I will greatly appreciate if you send me at least five (5) copies of both the photo and the article.

A photograph within a photo of me + the lakefront. A photograph within a photo of me + Navy Pier. A photograph within a photo of me + wild lions. A photograph within a photo of me + wild wolves. A photograph within a photo of me + Chinese dragon, for next Christmas mailing of cards. Please place me in the right, upper corner of the photos within a photo + make copies of them.

A gray & white (mix) “warmblood” horse(s) in an outdoor environment—shown in action, such as rearing up or jumping or climbing. I'd like the photo to convey freedom, strength, and the wisdom of nature. If possible, taken in a cold environment so that clouds of hot breath can be seen.

I want a photo of the whole block of 63rd and Marshfield, on the South Side, in the Englewood community. And, I want it taken in the daytime, like between 2:00 and 4:00 P.M. Make sure there's a lot of people outside. Pass out my name, address, and number to everyone on the block, and tell them it's information to “D-man.” It's a green and white duplex-like house (the only green and white house on the block) that my auntie “Gibby” lives in. I want the picture taken from the sidewalk that leads to the T-shaped alley going toward Ashland, facing slightly toward 64th and Marshfield. But make sure the majority of the west side of the block gets pictured.

The Aztec Sun Stone calendar (stone of the fifth sun). It's a basaltic disc about twelve feet in diameter, weighs about twenty-four metric tons. It's in Mexico's National Museum of Anthropology.

Jennifer Lopez music videos with her ex Ben Affleck on the boat with her butt showing. I will like to see her butt.

A tall brown-skin brother with neat four-inch plaited braids offering a sista a long-stemmed

rose + a loving smile. The brother dressed in clean shirt and pants and jacket and clean white gym shoes. Sista dressed in fitted shirt and jean pants, 'cause you know a brother love a sista with curve.

Picture of Tamms Year Ten staff, description of each person, name, one thing about them individually, and what kind of music they like.

At sixty-six yrs. of age I try to use a little humor: I want a picture of a trash can with the lid half off and two eyes peeking out as the trash can rolls down the hill toward an incinerator with the caption: I seem to be picking up speed I must be headed toward a bright future.

I would like a picture of me. I don't have any pictures of myself. They all were confiscated years back. The picture is to be sent to my mother in Puerto Rico.

[Grievances]

## BAD WRAP

*From public comments submitted to the U.S. Bureau of Land Management regarding Over the River, an art project proposed by artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude in 2005. Last November, the bureau approved the project, which includes the installation of fabric panels over a forty-two-mile stretch of the Arkansas River in Colorado. Construction may begin this year, with the two-week installation scheduled for display as early as August 2014. Jeanne-Claude died in 2009.*

The Arkansas River is my "home water" as I am an avid fly fisherman. I can only look forward to construction clutter, visitor traffic jams, and an influx of the most undesirable elements in our society.

I fail to see any "artistic" endeavor. I think it looks like shit.

We do need artists like these two, but we also need the people who tell them they're being ridiculous.

His "art" will be displayed to the public for two weeks; however, it will take THREE YEARS TO BUILD/DISMANTLE.

THEY SAY THAT all fabric panels have been strategically located to avoid bighorn sheep habitats. THEY SAY THAT the location of the fabric panels will allow both animal and human ingress and egress to the river. BUT CAN THEY BE SURE???

I have not seen anything that makes me believe that I will be able to use a fly rod under that canopy.

There are not enough porta-potties in the state to accommodate this many people.

Two weeks ago there was a rollover accident in the first major curve east of Swissvale. The truck was carrying hazardous waste. Traffic was shut down for four solid hours. This was just one accident, and these people want to push 250,000 people through our narrow canyon.

The canyon has always been a death trap. No escape, just sheer rock walls and water. No bridges, no exits, no alternate routes. Fire, flood, and hazardous spills will not have any mercy.

Are you personally prepared to take legal responsibility if a catastrophic situation occurs, i.e., hundreds or more deaths?

I have been told by a local agency that I need to trust the government on this. With Katrina survivors in mind, I guess that means I can expect to be huddled with the masses in a place where the restrooms don't work, starved, dehydrated, raped, and mugged until a working plan is developed, assuming I have lived through the ordeal.

I'm not against the project; I'm against the location. This is urban art.

This is all about trying to satiate an egotistical illness and someone peddling a barnful of bovine waste to what they hope is a gullible, preoccupied public.

I am one of those "less is more" kinds of people. I think the Grand Canyon is fine without a whitewash and the Arkansas River is beautiful without a scarf.

Has anyone thought about the geology? A fault line runs down the middle of the Arkansas River. What effect will all of the drilling have on the fault?

What makes them think the "walls" where they anchor the fabric will hold?

I seriously doubt that Christo's team will be willing to climb up and down the riverbanks to collect the trash that will be strewn throughout the area. How long will Walmart bags and cigarette butts scar nature's beauty?

How many bald eagles will mortally wound their wings, not used to all the wires?

Will the construction crews understand the fragility and importance of the brown trout spawn during late fall?

When all these "panels" start tearing apart from the wind that rips through that canyon and blow onto the road, how many car accidents will occur?

Who do they think they are that they can impose their art upon us?