

## TIMELINE (#16B) BUTYRIC ACID ESCAPEDE

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. This infamous escapade took place early in the second semester of the 1953-1954 school year and before Michigras (the U of M Mardi Gras celebration) in April, 1954. It occurred during my first year living in Lloyd House in West Quad.
  2. There were 3 key elements involved:
    - a. **Larry Green**, a first semester student and resident of Lloyd House. Over the subsequent years, Larry proved to be the most daring/reckless of all his Lloyd House contemporaries.
    - b. **Gomberg House** was located on the sixth floor of South Quad across Madison St. from West Quad and about a 10 minute walk from Lloyd House. Gomberg and Lloyd Houses were fierce competitors in residence house intramural athletics. Gomberg had recently beaten (some thought unfairly) Lloyd in the Touch Football (the major sport) Championship game earlier in the school year.
    - c. **Bob X**, a resident of Gomberg House, was a personal friend of Jim Miller of Lloyd House. He was a pleasant person who visited Jim regularly. He and I got to know each other only on a first-name basis through these visits.
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### EXCERPTS FROM THREE ARTICLES PERTAINING TO THE EFFICACY OF BUTYRIC ACID

(Note that all 3 articles were written 44 to 57 years after my Escapade described below)

1. FBI PROBING ACID ATTACKS AT ABORTION CLINIC  
Los Angeles Times, 7/19/1998

19 abortion clinics were squirted, sprayed or injected with butyric acid, an intensely noxious industrial chemical. The attacks have sent scores of workers and patients to hospitals with nausea and respiratory problems. Many clinics were closed for weeks until hazardous-materials cleanup crews could be called in and exposed surfaces could be replaced. Sometimes holes were drilled in doors or window frames and acid squirted into empty offices or air-conditioning units. Other times, **perpetrators walked into offices during business hours and spilled acid in hallways.**

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## 2. HISTORY OF VIOLENCE / BUTYRIC ACID ATTACKS

National Abortion Federation, 2010

Butyric acid is a clear, colorless liquid with an unpleasant, rancid, vomit-like odor. The goal of introducing butyric acid into an abortion clinic is to disrupt services, close the clinic, and harass patients and staff. Depending on the amount used and how it is introduced, butyric acid can cause thousands of dollars of damage, requiring clinics to replace carpeting, furniture, and conduct extensive cleanup of the facility. In addition, even after cleanup, butyric acid's smell leaves a reminder of the incident for months, and often years, to come.

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## 3. AH, I LOVE THE SMELL OF BUTYRIC ACID IN THE MORNING

Sipsey Street Irregulars, 2/22/2011

Butyric acid packs an odor combining the smell of a cocktail of rancid butter and vomit that has been left in a tightly-closed glass container to cook in the hot sun for 3 days. Laws regarding its tactical application have changed and I suspect that anyone caught squirting this stuff into a locked bus would probably find themselves under arrest as a terrorist.

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## ESCAPADE

1. Larry Green returned to his room at Lloyd House one afternoon from his organic chemistry class. He had a small vial of clear liquid that he obtained clandestinely (probably).
- 2 He invited everyone on the second floor to come into his room and take a whiff of the **butyric acid**.
3. We took turns doing that. Larry cautiously unscrewed the vial cap and we each took a very tiny whiff of its contents. Everybody agreed that it was probably the most vile smelling stuff in the world. None of us volunteered to take a second whiff.
4. After we had each had our whiff, we asked Larry what he planned to do with it. After all, he couldn't just throw it down the garbage shaft. We put our massive brainpower to work. Finally, someone came up with a fantastic idea and suggested, "Why don't we dump it in Gomberg House?"
5. We all agreed that this was a splendid idea. Larry, of course, volunteered to do the deed alone. But, somehow, it was decided that Tom Boyer and Ken Y would assist him.
6. We planned how to execute this daring operation and agreed to do it that very evening after dark.
7. The 3 of us walked over to South Quad and up the five flights of back steps to Gomberg House. It was very cold that night and we all had on heavy coats and hats pulled down on our heads as far as possible. To further avoid identification, I removed my glasses and put them in my pocket.

8. On the sixth floor, I was in the lead, Larry was in the middle, and Ken brought up the rear. We advanced steadily and Larry slowly dribbled the butyric acid on the hallway floor, attempting to stretch the droppings as far as possible.
9. We succeeded without anyone seeing us and were prepared to make our escape down the center stairway. We avoided taking the elevator for fear of someone seeing us.
10. At that exact moment, the elevator door opened and out walked, of all people, Bob X and a couple of his friends. He recognized me but did not know my 2 partners. He greeted me and our 2 groups passed in the hall without further ado. Fortunately, he didn't ask me why 3 guys from Lloyd were there in Gomberg. I would not have had an answer for him. We three walked down the center stairs and returned to Lloyd House.
11. We arrived home, breathed a sigh of relief and congratulated each other in having pulled off the biggest caper since the Brinks armored car robbery. Other Lloyd residents asked us about it and were pleased with our results.
12. It didn't take long for the law to catch up with us. Within 2 hours of our return, I received a phone call from our head man, Resident Advisor Chris Braun. He asked me to come down to his room on the first floor immediately. At this point, I knew the jig was up.
13. With a stern face, Chris told me that he had just received a call from his counterpart at Gomberg House. There was some very smelly mischief going on there and they were trying to put down the smell without being overcome by it. One of his residents, namely Bob X, had recognized a student from Lloyd House that he knew only as "Tom."
14. Chris informed me of the seriousness of this caper and said that the culprits were sure to be caught. He asked me if I was the "Tom" in question, and I confessed that I was. He asked me who the other 2 students were. I said that I couldn't tell him but that I would talk to them to see if they would also confess. Chris agreed.
15. I went up to the second floor and talked to Larry and Ken who immediately agreed to turn themselves in.
16. Larry, Ken and I went to Chris' room and confessed to being the perpetrators. He called the Gomberg Resident Advisor and discussed the course of action to take.
17. Their initial thought was to have us return to Gomberg and help in the clean up activities then going on. After thinking about this proposal for less than a second, we responded that this was an extremely bad idea. We could envision what the Gomberg residents might do when they found that we were the culprits.
18. We learned later (but did not verify it) that the butyric acid smell had traveled to the elevator shaft and infected at least one other floor. Many of the residents on those floors had to evacuate the building and stand around on the lawn or go elsewhere. Although it was extremely cold, most of the windows on the sixth floor had to stay open.
19. We were excused from our Resident Advisor's room with the promise that our deed would not go unpunished and that we would soon know our punishment.
20. The 3 of us immediately started thinking the worst (fines, suspension or expulsion from U of M) and how we would possibly explain this caper and punishment to our parents.

21. We never learned who or what combination of organizations decided our fate. There was no trial, testimony, witnesses, signed confessions or the like.

22. Within a week of our escapade, we learned that our punishment was to be:

- a. Pay all damages incurred as a result of the butyric acid spill.
- b. Work 20 hours each on the Michigras Float ("Alice in Wonderland") then under construction at a girls' dormitory, Stockwell Hall.

23. All 3 of us were very relieved by this fair and equitable judgment, to say the least!

### **PUNISHMENT**

1. None of the 3 of us was ever asked to pay anything to anybody as a result of the damages caused by the butyric acid spill.

2. The Michigras float being built by Stockwell Hall and others was a larger-than-life "Alice" popping out of a house. Her head came through the thatched roof, her legs came through the front, and her arms came through the windows on opposite sides of the house. Our only job was to gather small bundles of straw, wrap a thin wire around one end (while leaving several inches of wire free) and toss the bundle unto the ever-growing pile in the corner of the recreation room. These bundles were eventually wired to the inner chicken wire mesh to create the thatched roof. It was a tedious job requiring thousands of assembled bundles. On the bright side, there were a lot of female student volunteers and not many males.

3. To fulfill our punishment of 20 hours of work each:

- a. Ken Y never showed up at Stockwell Hall and served zero time working on the float.
- b. Larry Green showed up once and served about 3 hours.
- c. Tom Boyer showed up many times and easily served more than 20 hours. Of course, I had an added incentive since I met my first U of M girlfriend while working there. Her name was Claire Campbell and she was an attractive nursing student from Pinckney, Michigan. We had several dates and enjoyed each other's company until the end of the 1953-1954 school year, about 2 months later.