

Can we force ourselves into recession simply by talking about it? It's interesting to wonder. We all feel the economy slowing, and most of us probably know at least one person who was laid off or lost their job recently. Consumers are spending less and places are headed out of business. The analysts are interviewed and say there's no recession, but then the stock market resumes its great spacecoaster ride and no one knows what to think. But we do. We think it's time for some drinks. But the 2001 Hard Drinkin' issue understands that you don't have a lot of coin to spare, so we've made this a working-class edition, designed to soouse your troubles away—while keeping you flush. So go out and hoist a few, or many. The staff, which did numerous hours of copious research on these topics, will probably see you there.

(Note: As per usual, we intend this stuff as entertainment for legal drinkers only, and we remind you to use a designated driver, a cab, the El, the bus or your damn feet and NOT, under any circumstances, drive after drinking.)

Elaine Richardson

LETTERS TO- FROM THE EDITORS

Feeling the spirit

I want to congratulate Alan P. Mamoser for his insight and historic view of a city landmark ("Requiem for Maxwell Street," Dec 28). His article was especially poignant for me because, as a black boy living on the Near West Side, my mind still reels when I think about the ambience, the cracking, electrified energy of the Blues guitar; the pungent aroma of Jim's Original famous Polish. But most importantly, the karmic-collective-sacredness that seemed to permeate the air.

As a boy, my Uncle Miles—who sold two-wheeled-metallic refurbished-shopping carts—would take me to Maxwell Street with him every Sunday. As a young artist, I was always overwhelmed by the pallet-like sounds, colors and smells that blanketed the marketplace. I have always felt that Maxwell Street was the closest you would ever get, as an artist, to Corregio painting tiny oil still lifes to sell in the Roman marketplace. I use to do portraits and caricatures on Sundays, not for the money, but to be drenched in the energy of so many souls.

I recently painted a picture based on this quote by Mamoser: "These guys are the unsung musicians of Maxwell Street, the ones who didn't get famous like guitarist Jimmy Lee Robinson and band leader/organist Piano C. Red." The title of my painting is "I Sing The Blues." Check out my Website at www.artistsvillage.com.

It is the bluesman who embodies the subcultural or folk attitude; it is not printed music that reveals it as the profoundest reality (or a university) nor is it something learned but it is "passed on as a secret blood rite." UIC in its zest to destroy Maxwell Street cannot tell us what "life" is. As Richard Wright wrote, "Twentieth-century rationalism and technology, for all their material advantages, leave much to be desired in the realm of emotional and spiritual values."

*John H. Sibley, Chicago