

Richard W. Carlson

Nureyev-Fonteyn, RIP

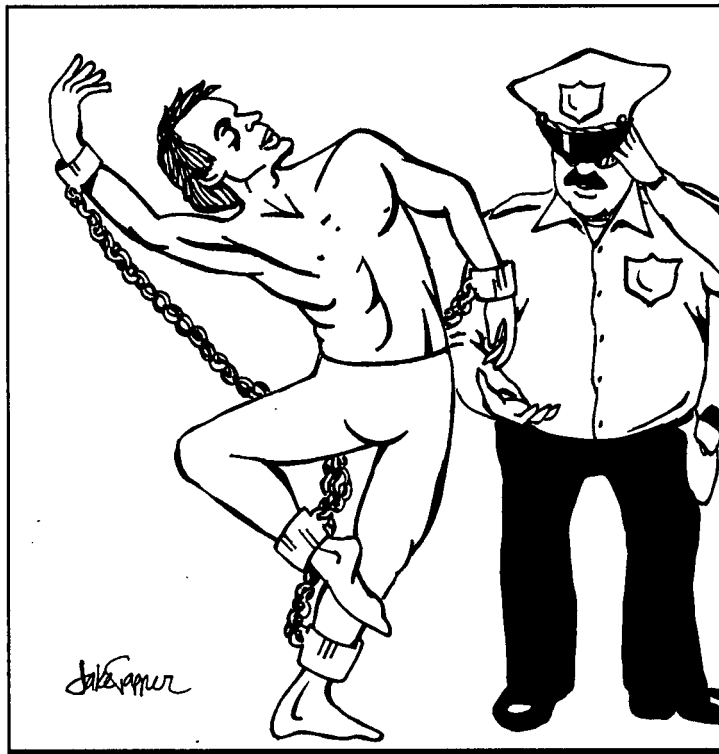
A remembrance from the Summer of Love.

The first time I met Rudolf Nureyev and Margot Fonteyn they were hiding behind a chimney on a tenement roof in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco. Nureyev was kneeling in the gravel facing the chimney, his body pressed against the bricks. Fonteyn was lying next to him wrapped in a full-length ermine coat. She was on her back and when I stared down at her she smiled broadly, and quite incongruously. Let me back up a half hour.

It was about 3 a.m., July 11, 1967. It was cool and foggy in San Francisco. I was sitting on a bench in the dingy squad room of Park Police Station on the rim of Haight-Ashbury. Lance Brisson and I had been filming a documentary on runaway teenagers. We had become partners after working together at the *L.A. Times* a few years before. We had teamed up in 1965 to make a documentary film on hoboes, shooting on trains, on skid rows, and in the hobo jungles remaining from the thirties. Now we were working full-time for ABC-TV.

We had just completed an awkward session with a man from Connecticut who had been reunited with his daughter. She was living in a crash pad with a dozen other pasty-faced

Richard W. Carlson is president and chief executive officer of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.



kids and was not happy with being dragged home. She was nasty and sullen and made faces during the interview I did with her father. She'd been brought in by police because her father had put up a reward of \$500 to anyone who found her. She was considered quite a prize among the underpaid Park Station police, who devoted considerable energy to finding her. She was away from her new friends and locked in a holding tank as quick as you could say Timothy Leary. Lance and I filmed the stilted reunion. At the time, I was too young to

feel sorry for the father. I watched him bundle the kid off to a cab heading for the airport.

We were packing up and gossiping with a friendly young black patrolman named Artie Fobbs. He and his partner Bill Delaney had just brought in a prisoner and had booked him. The deskman answered a ringing phone nearby and yelled at Fobbs. "This is the third call about a loud party on Belvedere Street," he said. Would Fobbs and Delaney drive over and tell them to knock it off? They would.

Shortly after, as Lance and I drove towards downtown we heard Fobbs's voice over our police radio. He was at the Belvedere address. He sounded excited. He was calling for an ambulance. A woman had fallen from a fourth-floor balcony and was badly injured.

A police car was parked in front of 42 Belvedere, a four-story wood frame apartment building with its front door open and lights in the upper windows. An ambulance came down the street behind us. Lance carried a hand-held newsreel camera and I carried a flood-light.

We found Art Fobbs on the back porch of the fourth-floor flat. He was looking down at a woman who was lying on her back in an alley moaning. Delaney was kneeling next to her. No one else seemed to be around. Fobbs said, "She ran right over the railing. I think her back is broken." (It was.)

"We could hear the music a block away when we drove up," Fobbs continued. "As I walked up the stairs, people were running through the apartment like a herd of buffalo, yelling and screaming. The last one was the girl who went over the rail. I think the rest climbed the back fence."

Lance and I wandered back in the apartment. It was typical of the time and place. A railroad, or shotgun flat. Victorian construction, semi-circular living room over the street, fireplace boarded for safety. Neo-hip decor: Indian bedspreads, and Country Joe and the Fish at Winterland posters for wallpaper. The place was a mess: clothes all over the place, beer cans, booze bottles. An 8mm projector was set up on a coffee table. A sheet was tacked in the doorway to the dining room as a screen. We flicked the movie on. I had seen it before. It was very old. It was called "Model T Hitchhiker." It featured a fellow and two women having sex in and around a Model-T Ford. The women were partly dressed, the man wore only his socks, his hat, and a moustache. Maybe you've seen it, too. It is a classic.

Was it guilt from watching this lewd but laughable old film that drove Fobbs's herd of buffalo from the apartment? Did they think their parents were coming home?

Doubtful. I could smell marijuana. Lance picked up a Marlboro hard pack on the table with the film. It was filled with a dozen "bombers," little fat marijuana cigarettes.

I held the light as Lance filmed the girl with the broken back being carried to the ambulance in a litter. Fobbs and his partner went back to lock up the flat, and Lance and I decided to leave.

"Excuse me," said a man in a bathrobe from the doorway of the house next door. "Will you tell those cops there's a herd of people on my roof?"

"Oh, *that* herd. Sure will."

We found Fobbs and Delaney in the apartment, rummaging around for more dope. The four of us trudged to the roof. Only about three feet separated us from the next roof, which had a small square structure and a large chimney in

its middle. We jumped over and I shined the light. The herd was crushed together—seventeen of them in all, mostly behind the chimney. Some lying, some standing, some sitting on each other. Only one was female and she lay on her back in a white ermine coat, her eyes closed tightly. Everyone else seemed to be trying to look nonchalant as if there was a logical reason for this rooftop gathering at 3:30 a.m. in the damp fog. Charades? A fraternity meeting?

Artie Fobbs took charge, barking and giving orders like it was an everyday event. He told everyone to line up in single file, jump back across, and follow him down into the kitchen through which they had collectively thundered. A small man in a pea coat, tight white trousers and slippers was first in line. He had a face like a Tartar. Behind him was the woman. Fobbs hopped across and turned to the man. "You can do it," said Fobbs encouragingly. The Tartar was sandy-haired and arrogant looking. He sneered at Fobbs and sprang over the chasm like a gazelle. He turned on a toe

in the gravel and extended his right arm, long slim fingers fluttering at the woman. She twined her fingers with his and gracefully leaped across, leaning into him as they waited for the others. I shined the light on the pair.

"Artie," I said. "I know who these people are. This is Nureyev and Fonteyn." I had seen their photo in that

morning's *Chronicle*. They had opened the San Francisco ballet season the night before in *Paradise Lost*. They were the greatest dancers in the world. "The Reigning Monarchs" was a typical press description of them. Nureyev supposedly was the greatest male dancer since Nijinsky, or something like that. Artie Fobbs looked at me like I was speaking Polish. The Russian Defector and the British Dame might just as well have been two burglars from the Tenderloin.

Back in the apartment nobody was talking, though the place was small and now filled with people. Nureyev strutted back and forth in front of the cheesy kitchen sink piled high with dishes and trash and kept pinching his lips with thumb and forefinger when Fobbs asked him questions. Dame Margot just smiled, a broad glistening smile that seemed permanently affixed. Bits of roof detritus clung to the hairs of her white coat. At one point Delaney became irritated with her, demanding to know what she found so funny.

Nureyev intervened with his fingers clamped on his lips, standing close to Delaney and mocking him. Delaney's face was red, and a vein throbbed in his neck. Not knowing what else to do, Fobbs called for a paddy wagon and had everyone hauled to Park Station. We filmed the crowd as they packed into the old blue van. The other men seemed sub-

dued and worried, although there was a lot of nervous giggling. But Nureyev was ever commanding. He leaped to the step, gripped a long vertical handhold, curved his back into a deep arch, and leaned back waving to an imaginary crowd. Delaney ended the moment by pushing him into the van and slamming the door and padlocking it.

At the precinct station all seventeen lined up on a wooden bench as their fate was debated. The Sergeant had never heard of the two people Fobbs described as celebrities. He called the Lieutenant in from the field, and then they all called the Captain at home and woke him up. The problem clearly was Lance and me. Though nobody knew who these people were, it was evident *we* thought they were important, and hence they must *be* important. Important people mean trouble. Among the hairdressers and waiters sitting on the bench was another personage, of sorts, the Assistant Director of the Seattle Symphony.

The general feeling among the cops was that it would be a lot less hassle just to let everyone go, smart-alecky attitudes or not. For one thing the Mayor was a loudmouth, and was always throwing his weight around with the police. He wouldn't be happy if celebrities were arrested.

Lance and I entered the debate about this time. Our thesis was pretty simple: You guys are free to do what you want. Just because you arrest hippies everyday on a whole lot less evidence and send them to state prison is no reason you shouldn't let a couple of world-famous, rich people skate away free.

They put the Captain on the phone. "Why don't you be a good fellow and forget this whole thing," said El Capitán.

"Oh, I'm afraid we can't do that," I said.

"Are you going to run a story about this if we let them all go?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed," I said.

Getting to the point, the Captain said, "Well, f--k 'em, tell Fobbs to book them all!" And so they did. Another lesson in my young life about how the world makes its important decisions.

After so many years, the reality of that night is reflected more in my notes of the time and in the memory of the film we shot. We used our old Auricon sound camera and a couple of things stand out in my mind.

The first is the guy from the Seattle Symphony. He is standing in front of a long booking desk. A sergeant is sitting behind with an old standard typewriter filling out forms and asking questions. Mr. Symphony is emptying his pockets as we film. He is placing their contents on the table and the Sergeant is describing them aloud as he logs them.

"One set of keys. One money clip. Sixteen dollars in bills, 35 cents in change. A pen knife. A marijuana cigarette. A marijuana cigarette? Is this yours?" says the Sergeant incredulously.

"Well, yes, it is," says the symphony person with a kind of sluggish honesty. →

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"Look, stupid," says the cop. "You're being booked for being in a place where dope was used. That's not that big a deal. How about turning off that camera for a minute?" he said to us.

We obliged.

"Listen you," he said with supreme contempt, "if you tell me this is your joint then I'm going to charge you with a serious felony. Do you get it? That's 'possession,' understand? Now let me ask you again. And think hard. Is this yours?" And he held up the brown bomber between thumb and forefinger about three inches from the balletomane's nose.

"Ah, no. I don't think it is," he said weakly.

"Lucky for you buster," said the Sergeant and threw it into a wastebasket.

When it came Nureyev's turn to be booked the dancer stood in front of the Sergeant smirking and tossing his shaggy blonde-red hair as he spelled his first name slowly and gave his age as 29. The Sergeant pecked out the answers with two fingers. The typewriter seemed as old as he was, and the scene went like this:

SERGEANT, *poised at the machine*: "Now Rudi, tell me your last name."

RN, *gathered to full height, speaking with a kind of aggressive femininity*: "Nureyev."

SERGEANT, *not typing*: "You want to spell that for me?"

RN: "Nurrr. Ayyy. Evvv."

SERGEANT: "I said spell it, buddy, don't just say it."

RN, *doing a slow pirouette*: "Ennn . . ."

SERGEANT, *typing*: N . . .

RN (*another slow pirouette the other direction*): "Yuuu . . ."

It went on like that. Later when I made a copy of the booking documents I noticed that the Sergeant had spelled it "Noureev" which is how it is listed in the records of the SFPD. Nureyev had told him his birth place was Ufa. (Capital of Bashkir, USSR.) The Sergeant had typed "Omaha."

As Nureyev walked back to his place on the bench he suddenly said to the Sergeant, "You know, if we were somewhere else you would have to pay a lot of money to see me." Lance snorted at that line and Nureyev popped a gum ball out of his mouth and winged it across the room at Lance. It missed and hit the wall.

The Sergeant had suffered through ten minutes of the spelling dance and was running short of patience. He leaped to his feet and snapped, "Listen, a--hole, you're not that big a name. I never heard of you. So knock it off or I'll lock you up right now." Nureyev looked insolent but he sat down and was silent.

Lance and I were nervous that we wouldn't be able to keep this story to ourselves, that the competition would

move in on us. We knew we would have an exclusive as soon as the seventeen were brought downtown to the City Prison and locked up where the press couldn't get to them and where TV cameras weren't allowed. The one problem was the reporters on the police beat at the Hall of Justice. Usually they covered for each other so there was only one to worry about at a time. Also, they were often drunk and asleep. As luck would have it, "the one to worry about" called just a few minutes before the herd was to be loaded in the wagon for the run downtown. The police deskman called to me and Lance.

"It's Billy Wimbush from the *Chronicle*," he said, holding his hand over the phone. "He wants to know if anything is going on out here. What do I tell him?" Billy was a sad lush. He carried a pistol in his cowboy boots and was known to pull it out in the press room when he was in his cups, which was often. He wasn't popular with the cops and he wasn't popular with his confrères, like Lance and me.

"Tell Billy it couldn't be quieter," I said. "Tell him the most exciting thing that happened all night was a bunch of people got caught smoking dope and watching a dirty movie." The deskman told him that, then hung up.

"Billy laughed," he said, "He couldn't be less interested." Then he laughed,

too.

Dame Margot Fonteyn and Rudolph Nureyev and their fifteen friends were bailed out about noon that day. The story made front pages everywhere. The *New York Times* headline said "Fonteyn and Nureyev Are Seized Fleeing Hippie Raid." Our film was in great demand. ABC went to the extraordinary length of feeding it live to London on the Early Bird Satellite; one of the first times news film had been transmitted that way. (Peter Jennings was the anchorman that night in New York. If you think he looks young now, picture him twenty-six years ago.) It was all quite a big deal.

That evening, the pair performed to a packed audience at the gilded Opera House. The critics said they were brilliant. I didn't go. I was happy to remember them leaping from roof to roof.

We did show up at the Opera House to see The Exit, however. The stories that day had brought reporters and camera crews and interested citizens from out of the woodwork. Hundreds were gathered along a roped-off red carpet that led from the side of the Opera House to a waiting limousine.

Lance and I stationed ourselves at the very end, near the car. This was not so easy. A half dozen hippies were crowded near the end of the carpet. Two were playing gui-

tars, and one fellow was reading a poem written on behalf of "Sgt. Sunshine," a San Francisco cop who had smoked a marijuana cigarette in front of reporters and cameras on the steps of the Hall of Justice. This gesture of solidarity with oppressed dope smokers had caused him to be now sitting in prison. The poet was shouting about a connection with this event and the day's travail for Nureyev and Fonteyn. I decided he was giving new meaning to the phrase "blank verse."

Tolerance was my middle name in those days, but I said, "You boys are going to have to move your act over *there*, to the side, because we are two newsreel madcaps who need this space right here."

I tried to state this reasonably but I couldn't seem to get the tone right. The poet and I ended up arguing and shouldering each other back and forth. He was a big guy, rather bison-like, with a great deal of hair. We were still shoving when the door at the other end of the rug opened. People cheered as Nureyev and Fonteyn came out of the building. She was wearing both her ermine coat and the dazzling smile. He was dressed all in white. They were each carrying an armful of red roses. As they came down the walk arm in arm towards us I saw a flicker in her eyes as she recognized us. The smile wavered for a moment and her lips formed a slight frown. She said something to Nureyev. He looked at me and smiled even more broadly.

Law was trying to film. The poet was blocking him. I gave the poet a solid shove. Nureyev stopped in front of us. With a flourish, he bowed and as his head lowered his arm came up with the roses and he switched them back and forth like a whisk broom across my face. The petals were damp. I couldn't back up, my hip was against the car. People crushed in. Nureyev stopped and held the flowers out. The guys with the guitars were pushing. A woman next to me grabbed the bouquet and crushed it to her chest.

Nureyev and Fonteyn disappeared into the limousine. □

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David Brock

The Other Anita Hill

Introducing Angela Wright, the pugilistic bureaucrat whose flaky stories became the Thomas haters' last hope.

Anita Hill's inability to show a pattern of harassing behavior by Clarence Thomas was one of the many atypical aspects of her case. If Hill was telling the truth, Thomas had chosen to sexually harass her—and only her—among the dozens of women who had worked for him over the years. As columnist Stephen Chapman wrote in the *Chicago Tribune* at the time of the hearings: "... to believe Hill, we have to believe that someone who had been the soul of probity suddenly, on her arrival, became a sexual thug—and then, the moment she left, wholly reverted to his saintly self, never to transgress again."

The heightened awareness of sexual harassment, a valued legacy of the Thomas-Hill scandal, set the stage for harassment accusations lodged against three U.S. senators—Democrats Brock Adams and Daniel Inouye and Republican Bob Packwood—in 1992. Ironically enough, each of those cases was far stronger—and more typical—than Hill's, principally because in each instance more than a half-dozen women came forward, some under a veil of anonymity, and



made allegations that, if true, constituted an undeniable pattern of abusive behavior by the senators. Eight women made allegations against Adams, nine against Inouye, and more than a dozen against Packwood. Anita Hill, however, remains Thomas's lone accuser.

That was a significant factor in the Senate's decision to confirm Thomas. As Democratic Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia put it in a speech on the Senate floor, "A responsible, credible citizen presents information about a nominee on a matter of personal behavior, on which there

are no direct witnesses and little direct corroborating evidence. . . . In such a case, I look closely at the individual's background and the FBI files to determine whether there are patterns or habits of behavior that would make it more or less likely that the individual behaved in the offending manner." In Thomas's case, the evidence showed no such pattern.

Hill herself, who has taught in the area of civil rights law, stated at a press conference after her charges were leaked to the media, "One of the things that I will say about sexual harassment generally, and I suspect that it's true in this case too, in fact I've heard rumors to that effect, but I cannot substantiate any of those. I will say, however, that harassment usually isn't an individual issue. It's not an

David Brock, investigative writer for The American Spectator, is author of the new book The Real Anita Hill: The Untold Story (The Free Press), from which this article is excerpted with permission. Copyright © 1993 by David Brock.