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Cover Art by Christopher M

First Class #23 is the first issue of the new printing schedule. We've moved to February/August from May/November due to the need for a 3-month cushion after the birth of progeny #2 (the beautiful Nora). Rather than hacking out something half-assed, we adjusted, and you hold the killer results in your hands. Thank you for your patience.

This issue is dedicated to the memory of poet Steven "Catfish" McDaris... who, unfortunately, is no longer with us. The very first submission I received in the First Class pobox after issue one back in 1995 was from fellow Milwaukeean "Catfish" McDaris. The first issue of First Class was a simulated lit-mag: a co-conspirator and myself created the writers and the stories they wrote, just to see what would happen. If it were not for Catfish's enthusiasm, First Class would not be. The second issue featured Catfish, the renowned Antler, Jim Buchanan and three faked writers: Dick Butkan, Slim Bitters, and Father Perry Didier. The very first chap from Four-Sep Publications, 'Prying', was instigated by Catfish's persistence, talent, and the fact that he brought along two killer writers (one living/now dead, one dead.... and, come to think of it.... they're all gone now...), some great illustrations and a few nasty stories of his own. If it were not for Catfish's persistence, Four-Sep Publications would likely not have the impressive catalog it has today. He was so damn into the poet's life that it could get on your nerves sometimes, but he always believed in his calling; how many of us can truly say that? I've got stories of times with him that I'll never forget, and his "Heeyyy, Chris, man..." is riding the aural memory waves in a special place in my brain. Some petty shitbags out there in this petty-ass small press world (egos incompatible with his; bigger, smaller or otherwise) made it their mission to despise him. He's pissing on every last one of you whenever the rain whips your flesh. Open wide....

Again, I am pleased that your eyes are on these pages.

- Christopher M.

700 People Dancing

The voices from all over
earth come through a little
radio. 35 people dead in
Jerusalem, so far.

The fog rolls in over Scotland,
elections coming in England,
devolution in a fortnight.

Races in Monte Carlo,
Sean Connery on the front page.
Building collapses, crashing
onto a wedding in the City of David.
More dead being dug out.

51 dead found in graves in Russia.
Oklahoma bomber of 168 dead to die.
Macedonia minus Alexander battles Albania.
Beirut against Israel.

Japanese lepers apologized to.
Wow! What a world! I sit in
my basement and smoke a cigar
and thank God and ask why?

- Steven "Catfish" McDaris