

least 500 of his thousand eyes fixed on the growth-industry aspects of their cult.

Copies of *Dr. Spudd's Etiquette for the Couch Potato* go for \$1.50 each, and the Potatoes also have an official newspaper, *The Tuber's Voice*, to which you can subscribe at the rate of four issues for \$5. Then there are Couch Potato and Couch Tomato T-shirts and buttons for \$1.25.

*The Tuber's Voice*, the newspaper, is a lively eight-pager filled with miscellany—columns, a letters page, stories by Couch Potato elders and readers, and a comic strip by Couch Potato Elder Bob Armstrong. It is Armstrong's farmhouse where the viewing is practiced. A Renaissance man of popular culture, Armstrong is a comic strip auteur, the creator of the estimable underground character, Mickey Rat. It was his playing of the musical saw that you heard in the soundtrack for *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

The Couch Potatoes also have a sociological interest in their kinky phenomenon. The flip side of the Official Couch Potato Products Order Blank contains a questionnaire/survey designed to get a fix on potential Potatoes. This consists mostly of a list of statements which the reader is asked to respond to in one of five ways—strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree and don't know. Sample statements:

- TV is God. (In Dr. Pangloss's world, it just might be.)
- Sometimes I think TV is watching me. (If the CBS eye winks at you, you know it!)
- TV is just radio with pictures. (Meat for the media metaphysician here.)

- Vietnam is not a real place: It was just a TV series and finally got canceled. (Wow!)
- The people on TV actually live inside the set and wait for me to turn it on. (Then how do you explain William Conrad?)

There are also essay questions, e.g., What is the most embarrassing thing you've ever seen on TV? Personally, I wouldn't have any trouble with that one: It's a toss-up between the time the circus elephant fouled the studio floor of one of the Spokane TV stations or a Showtime program in which Jerry Lewis, impersonating a little boy with a lollipop, snagged the stick against the inside of one nostril.

If you think you've got what it takes (or lacks) to be a Couch Potato, you can get the necessary information from the Couch Potatoes, Route 1, Box 327, Dixon, Calif. 95620. Who knows, membership may put you square in the forefront of tomorrow's most *de rigueur* cult. Where It's Happening, one of an elite corps of astigmatic visionaries, tuned in but in no wise dropped out.

Just before leaving the farmhouse in Dixon, we're witness to a keen sight. The TV crew has finished and is now replaying the interviews on their micro monitor while the Couch Potatoes, rapt as if they'd locked gazes with Medusa, watch themselves on TV. It's hard competition for *Being There*, which is still going on an adjacent set. They watch with unalloyed attention, not so much as a tassel on a fez stirring. The screen has them magnetized. They live the Couch Potato motto: *Sic Semper Potatum Reclinus!* □