

Boston Driver: A Tale of 1988

by Luke Salisbury

“These idiots are going to kill each other!” shouted Jerry Parkhurst, as he blew his horn at a Volvo that cut him off at the Charlestown entrance to the Tobin Bridge. It was the afternoon rush hour on Friday of the Labor Day weekend, a hot, oppressively polluted day in Boston. Jerry shook his head and cursed himself for living in, “The place with the worst drivers in the hemisphere, except Mexico City.” Going north out of the city on the Tobin Bridge was always an adventure. “The Commonwealth of Massachusetts removed the toll booths in a surprisingly intelligent move,” Jerry explained to his wife Judith, as they crossed the bridge.

“But it lets these jerks drive faster. No matter how fast you go, some asshole has got to go faster.”

No sooner had Jerry, an architect for a small but aggressive firm, said this than a ‘78 Bonneville came up on the left, and a van bearing the logo of a plumbing supply company tore by on the right. Each vehicle must have been traveling at least 90 mph. Jerry’s BMW 320 was squeezed between a wall of exhaust from the Bonneville and the homicidal blue blur of the van.

“Goddamn it! They didn’t even see us!”

The Parkhursts were going to dinner at friends in Chelsea who’d bought an enormous house for a good price in a seedy neighborhood. “I told you I didn’t want to go!” yelled Jerry. “Have you ever crossed this damn bridge and not been run off the road by a guinea in a big car?”

“In Boston you complain about Hispanics,” said Judith, who worked for Bank Boston and made more money than Jerry.

“Nobody drives faster than Puerto Ricans.”

Jerry negotiated the turn off the Tobin and found himself behind an oil truck. “Where the hell is he going on such a hot day?” The truck slowed to a crawl. A husky teenager in a Camaro began to honk. “Is someone cutting his balls off,” Jerry said, and nearly gave the “finger,” but this wasn’t open highway, and thought better of it.

After breathing Diesel exhaust, listening to two solid minutes of honking, and getting lost, they found the Spencer’s house. The dinner was excellent. Jerry and Judith, who rented in the South End, were envious of the sprawling Victorian. Jerry told Carol Spencer, “Your place is great, but you must hate the bridge.” Carol shrugged and said, “Depends when you were on it. At night, the city looks very beautiful from the bridge.”

Going home after four Heinekens, Jerry was in a better mood, and decided the best way to cross the bridge was fast. He floored the BMW as they turned onto the ramp and almost hit a red Firebird. The driver, a curly-haired man of twenty, aggressively gave the “finger.” Jerry honked and gave it back. The young man stuck his hand out the window and jabbed his finger up and down in a way Jerry found particularly obscene. Jerry sped up, coming within a few feet of the Firebird.

“He wants to play, I’ll play!”

The Firebird slammed to a stop. Jerry had to stop sharply to avoid hitting it. The driver hopped out. Jerry looked around. No room to maneuver. A car slowed down behind and the Firebird was in the middle of the ramp—there was no getting by. The driver was big and needed a shave. Judith uttered one of Jerry’s favorite remarks: “Is there a

white guy in this city that doesn't lift weights?"

The guy was stocky and walked with the confidence of a linebacker. His biceps were big and smooth. A red tee-shirt covered a well-developed chest. He strode up to Jerry's window.

"What's your problem, asshole."

Jerry locked his door and sent up the window.

"You want that finger broken off?"

Judith raised her window and snapped her lock shut. The guy kicked Mark's door. The BMW shook. The sneaker print later proved quite hard to remove. "Jerkoff!" yelled the guy, clearly enjoying himself, and kicked the BMW again.

"Overpriced too," he said, walking back to the Firebird. He patted a red plastic pepper, a "guinea horn," that hung from the rearview mirror, gunned the motor, spun his tires, and roared away. Three cars had stopped behind Jerry. They honked as Jerry fumbled with the ignition. The BMW had stalled.

Jerry couldn't sleep that night. Judith was sympathetic, though she did point out she had wanted to go to Maine for the weekend. "The city is full of crazies. Including you." Jerry was so upset he couldn't make love, and couldn't fall asleep, even after watching the second rental movie—a French thing Judith said would "put Marcel Proust to sleep." Jerry kept thrashing, which woke Judith; she touched him, but nothing happened. At five, Jerry got up and went for a run.

He had planned to work over the weekend, and went to his office, a sleek collection of renovated rooms in Fort Point Channel, an area where artists were trying to hold onto lofts as buildings were renovated. Jerry was forty and beginning to feel he ought to be doing better professionally. He wanted

a promotion and feared his office mate, Jen, an MIT graduate ten years younger, might get it. Jerry was at the office by eight but did nothing but pace.

“In front of my wife,” he said. “In front of my wife. In front of my goddamn wife.”

Jerry and Judith had been together for eleven years, married for seven, and neither his ability to fight nor the necessity of defending her had ever been an issue, but Jerry kept repeating that phrase. The issues in their marriage were Jerry’s desire for an occasional affair (Jen would be nice but had a boyfriend), and Judith’s desire for a child. These issues were dealt with by joking, lying, and putting off the decision to get pregnant. This troubled Judith who was thirty-eight.

All Saturday Jerry fumed about the “asshole” who jumped out of his care and “insulted” him. Jerry wished he’d gotten out of his car and done something. He wasn’t sure what. “I’m not small enough to be a little guy or big enough to make anyone back off.” He tried to laugh it away. “I’m an architect. I’m educated. I did everything I could stay out of Vietnam. What’s happening to me?”

For several weeks Jerry was careful while driving. He didn’t give the “finger.” Judith noticed and said, “It’s about time. Is it really that satisfying? Nobody’s shocked. Women do it.”

“You don’t understand. Women can walk away from anything.”

Jerry was careful not to cut anyone off, not to honk, even on Storrow Drive, and managed to curtail the monologue he carried on about other drivers. He watched and discovered half the drivers in Boston kept up a running commentary on traffic around them.

For several weeks shame at being upstaged on the bridge washed his anger away, but then the feeling returned. Why should he be the only gentleman? Why should he be the victim of every barbarian with a driver's license? Jerry wanted his "space" — that indefinable but essential few feet other drivers ought to damn well give, even in traffic. He wanted the right to turn left, to drive only ten MPH over the speed limit and not have every Rambo in a van blow him off the road and announce his triumph with his middle finger. Jerry felt the sides of his BMW were an extension of his sensibility. He wanted scumballs to keep the hell away.

Over Columbus Day weekend Jerry and Judith went to Truro on Cape Cod. A steady stream of traffic moved both ways on Route 6 but the trip out was uneventful. On Sunday, Jerry was driving—he insisted—Jerry turned neatly onto the highway through a break in traffic, looked in the mirror, and right on his bumper, almost in the backseat, was a bicyclist giving him the "finger." The rider looked tremendously athletic and handsome in skin-tight, black Spandex.

"Look both ways, asshole!"

Jerry was stunned. First of all, he had looked, and saw the bicycle at what appeared to be a great distance. For Christ's sake, there was heavy traffic in both directions! He'd done a good job just crossing the highway.

"You jerk!"

The rider was suddenly next to Jerry, right at the window on the driver's side. Jerry was furious. The idea a bicycle could challenge him, insult him, pull even with him, was too much. He swerved at the rider, and yelled, "You want to die?" Jerry didn't wait for an answer and sped up as the rider saluted him with a finger high over his head, like an Olympic champion telling the world he's number one; though, of course, he used a different finger.

“I could have killed him!” Jerry yelled, as they roared eastward. “I could have killed him! What the hell did he do that for?”

“You cut him off,” said Judith, tensely.

“Goddamn him!”

Jerry yelled for twenty minutes about “whackos” on Massachusetts’ roads, but all the time he was thinking, “I ran like a rabbit from a guy on a bicycle.”

“My God,” said Judith. “You could have ruined our lives. What’s wrong with you?”

The weekend was ruined. Jerry brooded and “fumed,” as Judith said. Everything made him angry. When they talked about politics, women on Welfare, the Red Sox, friends’ marriages, Jerry picked an argument. Judith was angry too and suggested Jerry see a therapist, which made him angrier. Finally, in what Judith called a “burst of maturity,” she purchased a fat novel by a woman, and read it while Jerry took long walks.

Jerry demanded he drive back to Boston. Judith threatened to leave him if they had an accident, but he drove obsequiously slowly and stayed behind old people as much as possible. Jerry did a lot of thinking on those walks through the scrub pines on unpaved roads in Truro. “I need an act,” he kept saying. “Everybody’s got an act. I don’t lift weights. I’m too old to learn a martial art. I don’t look like I just got out of prison, so I can’t scare the body-by-Nautilus-mind-by-Hitler idiots who roam Boston in fast cars and dirty vans for the purpose of venting hostility at men with decent jobs. Everybody’s got an act—weights, Karate, or just plain balls.” Jerry cursed a world that turned women into feminists and men into savages.

“Women call you pig. Men call you asshole. Everybody gets

in your face. It's how they make their lives bearable. God, people suck. I'm an educated, forty-year old, who's struggled to overcome racism and sexism, and I'm not permitted to drive a car. Doesn't anybody want to be a human being?"

The day after Labor Day, Jerry applied for a Firearms Identification Card. He went to the local precinct station and filled out an application stating he feared for the safety of his wife and himself because they lived in Boston. Jerry was told he would have to wait 30 to 60 days while his record was checked. He nodded, content to wait. That night, he called a friend who worked at the D.A.'s office, and asked about extra Celtic tickets. During the conversation, Jerry casually inquired where criminals got guns. After an analysis of the aging Celtic backcourt, he was told, quite incidentally, guns could be purchased at porno stores.

Two months later, the F.I.D. card arrived.

On the first Tuesday in January Jerry bought a gun. At lunch, after an uncharacteristic drink—Isn't the world between those who drink at lunch, and those who exercise?—Jerry walked up to the adult entertainment area, the Combat Zone, and found a porn shop on Washington Street. The Zone was a grimy area where prostitutes and muggers work the streets at night and the homeless and miserable patrol them by day. It was a blustery cold January day; the streets were almost empty. The store's front windows were protected by iron grates but inside was warm and bright. Jerry was surprised. He expected the place to be a grim extension of the street, but instead, the rows of magazines, aisle of videos, even the comically large plastic penises, with fat, pink balls, behind the counter, looked scrubbed, and almost cheerful. Jerry thought if he didn't look closely, he could be in a Seven Eleven. The magazines were red and yellow, the videos pink and purple, with, of course, lots of bare flesh, but the white floor and drop ceiling, seemed anti-

septic. Jerry decided this was sanitized post-AIDs pornography. A closer look at the magazines revealed the same dulled faces of over-weight women trying to smile while sodomized, or performing fellatio on the swollen members of stupefied young studs, that he remembered from dirty pictures at Choate. Jerry eyed a gnarled, battery-driven, ten-inch rubber prick, and figured that might take Judith's mind off her boss.

A Puerto Rican wearing a Yankee cap was behind the counter, while a fat man, in a white scally cap and gray zippered sweater, sat in a Plexiglas booth counting money. A half-smoked cigarette burned in an ashtray where a ceramic flamingo stood on a chipped leg. The guy seemed vaguely feminine. Jerry wondered if he had tits.

Deciding this had to be done quickly, Jerry walked up to a two-foot square in the Plexiglas and said, "I'd like to buy a .38."

The fat man looked at him carefully. He must have been deciding if Jerry looked like a cop. "You got money?" Jerry nodded. The fat man kept looking at Jerry and reached down. Two boxes appeared. He took out a .38 Police Special—a squarish weapon that made Jerry think of crew-cut cops who tried to keep order at demonstrations when he'd been in college. "I can go ya' one better," the man said, in a surprisingly pleasant voice, and showed Jerry a 9 mm Berretta semi-automatic with a twelve shot clip. Jerry whistled softly. He didn't know about guns, but had heard of 9 mm Berretas from TV. The weapon was smooth, and reminded Jerry of Harrison Ford's pistol in *Blade Runner*. In less than three minutes, Jerry had spent \$475, and walked out with the gun and a box of ammunition.

He didn't tell anyone about the Berretta, and didn't put it in the BMW right away, but for the first time in months, Jerry Parkhurst was at peace. He was as calm as the fat man who let his cigarette burn, and so matter-of-factly produced and

sold Jerry a gun, as if he's been waiting for him all along. The fat man with his ceramic flamingo was a figure in Jerry's life, like a wild friend known in college.

Judith noticed her husband was calmer. "Are you exercising more?" Jerry smiled and said he was. Much to Judith's surprise, when a pick-up truck cut them off on Storrow Drive and the driver slowed down and gave Jerry the "finger," Jerry only shook his head, and said, "This town is full of creeps." Judith expected an outburst and feared Jerry might be too upset to make love over the weekend. To her surprise, Jerry made love four times in two days with an unhurried passion that made Judith fantasize about Jerry rather than her boss.

"You've really got a handle on yourself," she told him.

"You've got to grow up sometime," Jerry said.

Jerry put the gun in the glove compartment of the BMW. Judith wouldn't find it. She'd lost her glove compartment key and carried her classical and Joni Mitchell tapes in a cigar box. The Berretta joined Jerry's Rolling Stone, Beach Boy, and Cream tapes, which Judith said were "mildewing" in the glove compartment.

Jerry found himself driving more carefully. He had to admit, now that a gun rode with *Between the Buttons* and *Aftermath*, he enjoyed driving. It was like conservatives said, "Peace through strength." Jerry didn't care for politics. He voted Democratic out of a vague sense this connected him to a part of his life gone in every way except the music he listened to. Jerry loaded the gun, and clicked the safety on and off. He didn't test fire it. He wasn't looking for trouble.

Driving was a pleasure. Jerry drove in a state of grace, as he called it. He bothered no one, no one bothered him, and the cutting-off, horn-blowing, "finger-giving," and cursing just withered away, like Marx said the state would after the

revolution. Jerry's "grace" lasted three weeks, when the BMW began stalling while decelerating. Jerry was on the Tobin Bridge returning from the New England Shopping Center where he'd gotten a good deal on Sam Cook and Otis Redding tapes, when he found himself behind a fuel truck that seemed to slow down for the sole purpose of causing the BMW to stall. Jerry blew the horn at regular, aggressive intervals. This infuriated a muscular, swarthy man in a Ford Escort. Despite the presence of a woman and two small children, the guy kept turning around, yelling, and furiously gave Jerry the "finger."

"Nice way to behave in front of your family," Jerry said, and shook his head. When he turned off at the Haymarket exit, the Escort stayed right on his tail. Jerry unlocked the glove compartment. He was sweating. He found the gun with his right hand, took it out, and clicked off the safety. Jerry wondered if he would say something like, "Make my day," or if he'd be too nervous to speak. "But maybe nothing will happen."

At the light by Haymarket Station on New Chardon Street, the door of the Escort flew open and a guy Jerry guessed was Italian, about thirty-five, 180, wearing a white winter coat with yellow fur collar, bounced out with a sturdy but sluggish gait. He hustled over to the BMW.

"What's your problem, ass ..."

The guy saw the Berretta.

"Sorry, buddy. It's OK."

The guy retreated to the Escort.

Jerry was so surprised, he almost dropped the gun. He's been too nervous to say anything, and if he had, it probably would have been an apology. The Escort shot through the caution light and Jerry sat shaking while the light turned

green and red and green again. He had found pointing a gun terrifying. Several cars came up and cruised around him without honking. He popped a tape in the stereo and drove off listening to "Stupid Girl."

For the rest of the weekend Jerry couldn't get the smile off his face. He came home with a bottle of Tequila and spent all Saturday in bed with Judith. He got happier as he got drunker. For once alcohol brought no anger, no grievances about Judith's boss, Boston drivers, or George Bush. Judith wondered if her husband was having an affair. When half the bottle was gone, she asked. Jerry said, "I'm going to have one with you."

Two weeks later Jerry and Judith were coming home from a movie in Harvard Square, when a blue and gray van cut them off on Memorial Drive. Jerry yelled at the driver and vigorously gave the "finger." Jerry was surprised and so was Judith. His rage flew out of a place he'd quite forgotten. The van, which had a rear ladder and porthole like a space ship, stayed in front of them, and swerved back and forth.

"No, Jerry!" yelled Judith. "It isn't worth it."

Jerry furiously honked and held the "finger" over the steering wheel. "You'll be sorry," said Judith, now angry at the probable confrontation. Ordinarily Jerry would have slowed to let the other driver get away, but this time he said, "I'm staying right on his ass," and did. The next light was at the BU bridge and the van skidded to a stop. A big man in a plaid lumberjack shirt that didn't come from LL Bean, jumped down as if descending from the cockpit of a B-17, and ran to the BMW cursing. The man was Judith's nightmare of her husband's highway fate. The van was spotless; the driver was not. He was fortyish, Caucasian, missing a tooth, and horror of Judith's horrors, had a tattoo on the back of left hand. Judith actually thought her husband might run and a vision of hairy, tattooed arms swinging after

Jerry as he sprinted down the joggers' path by the Charles River, went through her mind as the two hundred pound monster grabbed Jerry's door handle. Judith thought the man would rip open the door and then rip her husband's head off.

"Get out, punk!"

Judith looked away, then saw Jerry open the glove compartment and take something out.

"Talk to this," said Jerry, coolly.

"Oh, shit," said the burly van driver. "Jesus." He stepped back, and walked to the van shaking his head, as if some fundamental principle of the universe had been violated, and it might take the rest of the day to figure it out.

"My God!" screamed Judith. "You've got a gun!"

They argued about the Berretta for two days. Judith insisted Jerry, "Give it to the police," Take it back," or, "Throw it in the ocean." Jerry explained the gun was registered and "completely legal."

"Men," said Judith, pacing over the dark Persian rug in their living room, "I don't understand. Why do you feel challenged all the time? What are you trying to prove?" They argued fiercely but unlike the arguments which followed Jerry's ranting about Boston drivers, ("Other males," Judith unfailingly pointed out), she yelled and Jerry was calm. Judith, in fact, had never seen him so calm during an argument. When she realized this, she stopped, told Jerry that if he ever used the gun she'd leave him, and extracted a promise he'd seek "help." Jerry promised.

Jerry Parkhurst had never felt more in control of his life.

Everything from work to sex to driving became a pleasure. He was very careful in the car. He didn't cut people off, took less offense when cut-off, and though Jerry felt he could now "give the finger to God," didn't give it to anyone.

The Parkhursts passed a blissful winter. Jerry was promoted and took Judith to Jamaica. Jerry had no problems on the roads in Negril or Boston, though he did get a speeding ticket on Memorial Drive, and Judith dented a fender trying to ease into a space on Dwight Street. Judith was promoted and got a big increase in salary. Sex was so good they turned down dinner invitations. The Parkhursts began looking for a house in the near suburbs on weekends, and Judith stopped using birth control. Jerry reached a personal pinnacle of success in March, when he answered an ad in the *Globe*, and purchased a Celtics' season ticket.

"It wasn't my fault," Jerry told Judith. He had promised to tell anytime he pulled the Berretta. Jerry was scrupulous about this. He believed in honesty. Honesty, along with the gun, protected him. Other people had St. Christopher medals, tasseled peppers, tiger tails, crucifixes, graduation tassels; Jerry was honest. He told Judith everything.

"It wasn't bad," he said. "But it was unavoidable."

While coming back from Central Square in Cambridge where Jerry bought a Pat Matheny tape for Judith's birthday, and after two drafts at T.T. the Bears, he was coming up Brookline Street at the speed limit, which infuriated the driver of a rusty, gold Pontiac—"a real shitbox"—who honked and cursed, and swerved all over the road, insisting Jerry pull over. Jerry put up with this for three blocks, and then stopped right in the middle of the street.

A wiry guy in his twenties got out carrying a tire iron. He was what Jerry feared—feared more than blacks who Jerry thought had a right to their anger, and who Jerry went out of

his way to avoid antagonizing. This guy was white and no more than 5' 7". "Little guys are the worst," Jerry always said. This one wore a black tee-shirt and tight Levis over a body that was "drug or alcohol skinny." The guy had a dragon tattooed on his left forearm and a scar that ran from the middle of the left cheek to his mouth. He moved quickly. A big belt buckle flashed in the April sun.

Jerry was afraid. This was the first time since he bought the gun he'd been afraid. A wave of panic gripped him. When the little guy raised the tire iron to smash the BMW's taillight, Jerry suddenly found his voice.

"Freeze!"

The guy looked up. His narrow, scarred face was full of satisfaction at the power to disfigure a new car, then curiosity, then fear.

"I'll blow your goddamn head off!"

Jerry didn't recognize his own voice. His words were a hoarse whisper. He didn't think anyone could understand, and maybe the guy in the tee-shirt didn't but the tire iron came down, and he slouched back to the Pontiac.

Jerry waved the "shitbox" around, and gave the guy a hard look as the old car went by. Jerry found something hard in himself. He didn't tell Judith about the hard place, though he mentioned details like the belt buckle, which depicted a man and woman performing oral sex, and the "Don't Like My Driving, Dial 1-800-EAT SHIT" sticker on the rear bumper. He didn't tell about the hard place. It wasn't anger. It wasn't giving the world back its own shit—"Dial 1-800-eat yourself, pal," Jerry said a dozen times as he drove home listening to "Gimme Shelter" and "Midnight Rambler"). The hard place was beyond meanness or bravery. The knot in Jerry's psyche made him shudder. He was glad he was the one with the gun.

Luck, they say, runs in threes, and it did for Jerry Parkhurst. He was on edge after the Pontiac, and tried to avoid trouble, but the calm of the winter, the confidence of the man who could defend himself, deserted him. Jerry felt he was going to be tested. He didn't know how. It might be someone else with a gun. "If I were a little shit in a \$300 car, I'd carry a gun."

Judith noticed Jerry was tense in the car. "Why don't you leave the thing home?"

"I'm thinking about it," Jerry said.

But he didn't. And it was a good thing. Jerry had three run-ins in three weeks. First, an ancient VW van scraped the BMW in Leverette Circle. The van stopped and a huge ex-hippy (Jerry's description), got out. Judging from the tools in the van, the ex-hippy was a carpenter, and judging from the pace he approached and tone of voice, he didn't want trouble. "Your fault," said the curly-haired thirty-five year-old, whose stomach fell over his belt in the manner perfected by men who work the trades.

"Screw yourself," said Jerry, pointing the gun out the window.

"Oh, come on," said the carpenter. "It was your fault."

The idea someone could be reasonable with a gun pointing at him infuriated Jerry. "Get out of here!"

"OK. OK. But listen, you could hurt someone."

Afterward Jerry thought he'd behaved badly and decided he wouldn't show the gun unless necessary. Jerry decided he was still "shaken" by the guy with the tire iron and would have to be more careful. He was very careful for a week, but

a second run-in hardened his resolve. In the Back Bay, Jerry got into a dispute over “Boston’s major problem after human decency” —parking places. Jerry was at a light on Newbury Street when he saw a space half way down the next block. He went through the caution light, stopped beyond the space, and as he looked in the rearview mirror, a yellow Jaguar KXJ, blaring rap music, appeared as if from another dimension, and slid into the spot. Two college-age men sat laughing in the front seat. “They think they own the whole goddamn world,” said Jerry, and from the looks of the car, they probably did. Both wore crimson and white “Rugger” shirts. Both were big, light-haired, and athletic in a husky, preppy way. The music was so loud all Jerry could distinguish was its hypnotic, surly inner-city beat. He felt the hard place become a numbness which spread over his body. He put the Berretta in his belt, closed his blazer over it, and got out.

The young men in the “Rugger” shirts exchanged glances, and laughed hilariously. Jerry saw it all. They were rich, they were irresponsible, the world belonged to them, people did what they wanted or got out of the way. They were, in every sense, the inheritors of the earth. Jerry didn’t stop to think this was the first time he’d gotten out of the car to confront someone. He didn’t stop to think this was the first time he’d gone numb.

Jerry walked up to the driver’s side of the KKJ and said, “Please move, I was here first.” He was surprised by his politeness. Judith always said if he’d be more direct, he could get his way with strangers. “Please move,” Jerry whispered into the teeth of the music.

“Can’t hear you,” said the driver, shrugging, and giving Jerry a helpless, boyish grin. The other guy shrugged and started to get out.

Jerry unbuttoned the blazer, pulled out the Berretta, and stuck it in the driver’s face. The kid was so surprised, he

went limp. The other kid, who was wearing Harvard sweat pants, was still grinning. Suddenly the music stopped and the Jag backed up so fast it hit a Toyota behind it. Jerry jumped and barely avoided being hit as the XKJ tore down Newbury Street. The kid in the sweat pants saw the gun, and yelled, "Wait, Chip! Wait!" as he ran after the Jag.

"It takes more than rap music to be a nigger," said Jerry.

Nothing happened for a week. Jerry smiled every time he thought about the Jaguar. "Social justice." Jerry still took the gun, ("Don't leave home without it."), but felt he didn't need it. Several times Jerry didn't take it, and drove all over the city, even to Chelsea, before coming home.

Jerry wasn't sure why he took the gun the second Saturday in May. Judith was visiting a friend at a women's commune in Vermont, and he stayed in town. After a movie, Jerry decided to get ice cream at Steve's on Mass. Ave., and drove up Newbury. He went by the place Chip and friend learned money and size don't rule, and drove by the Japanese restaurant and Avenue Victor Hugo Book Store. As Jerry started to turn onto Mass. Ave., a beat-up blue Chevy raced into the intersection. Jerry had a choice—back off or go for it. He didn't hesitate. He started to go but the Chevy came right at him and took—demanded—the intersection. Jerry slowed down. He stuck his hand out the window and delivered an energetic series of "birds." He rode the horn, satisfied that whoever made him back down, was receiving sufficient public humiliation. Jerry wasn't surprised or gratified when the Chevy stopped and a thirtyish Hispanic-looking man got out. Jerry could have floored the BMW and gotten away. Perhaps the man gave him the chance. He wore a blue tee-shirt and tight red Levis. As he walked up to the BMW, Jerry wondered if the senõr had a knife.

"I didn't hit you. Why you give me the 'finger'?"

Jerry rested the gun on the window.

“Little car. Little gun.”

“Don’t get any closer.”

“I’m not afraid.” The man stepped forward. Maybe he did it to show he wasn’t afraid. Maybe he did it because Jerry told him he couldn’t. Maybe he was going to reach for the gun. Jerry never knew. Jerry pulled the trigger. The bullet entered under the man’s left eye and exited the right rear of his skull.

Jerry Parkhurst drove to the Tobin Bridge. After crossing, he did a U-turn and came back to the place where the city always looks so good at night.