

**Cocksucking Tires Renowned Photographer,
But He “Can Eat Ass for Hours.”**

**Old Reliable is the last of an endangered species:
a photographer who hires dangerous models off the streets.**

**OLD RELIABLE:
A LEGEND IN HIS OWN TIME**
*The Photographer Whose Boys
Made Drummer Fresh...and Scary!*

By Jack Fritscher

Interview recorded in Hollywood, June 1982, and published in the *California Action Guide*,
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Author’s Historical Context Introduction
written February 19, 2004

Jack Fritscher: David Hurles drafted his memoirs as an unpublished work in 1992 titled *No Title Necessary: A Few Notes, Comments, and Observations* and gave me a copy for safekeeping. The memoir is structured in a kind of shorthand around each Old Reliable video feature with notes about the models, the apartment, the shoot, and autobiographical material about his life. As an eye-witness to so much of it, I can fill in quite a lot of the shorthand with the actual *Sturm und Drang* that surrounded David and his boys. His memoir coordinates nicely with my memoir-novel *Some Dance to Remember* completed in 1984 and published two years before David’s memoir. First, we constructed David Hurles, and then we de-constructed David Hurles. His life is very French, very existential, and very much an independent film.

David Hurles and I met in San Francisco, May, 1975, and remain friends at this long distance to this day in 2004. Life made us best friends but not, after our first comic attempt, sex partners. However, we were so intimate—so, in a way, literal “domestic partners”—that in March, 1977, David Hurles and I bought a house together which, after his move from San Francisco to Hollywood, I bought and still own.

Back in the day, in 1977, when no other gay magazine (of the few that existed) would touch his daring photographs, I was editor in chief of *Drummer* and was the first to publish David’s images. Fearing rejection from queens, he was reluctant; but *Drummer* was not *Queen’s Quarterly*. As I hoped, his men were an instant hit with the leathermen who understood how I was homomasculinizing *Drummer* so that it was about manliness as much as leather.

David Hurles’ rugged images of blue-collar men invented, and made way for, the bear culture.

I also published several transcriptions of David’s sexual audiotapes which, after he produced them in the tape medium, I re-wrote and produced for the medium of *Drummer* so the dialog would read according to the conventions of dialog on a page—in short, like a play. To make the initial transcriptions, I hired Steve McEachern, who founded and ran the fisting palace,

the Catacombs, in the basement beneath his transcribing service.

David's models were truly candid artists of the spoken word. However, without an edit, without polish, without timing, raw conversation rarely plays on the page. Nothing is worse than unedited blab, and sex-blab unedited sounds as weird as the sex act looks to someone who's not involved in the act.

Beginning in May 1975, David invited me into the underworld of his many adventures which I thought a significant part of the epic history of emerging gay culture. Many people suspect that the character of the porn mogul, Solly Blue, in my novel, *Some Dance to Remember*, is based on David Hurles. As a writer, I must invoke the "coincidental" clause that follows at the end of every film. David Hurles is a real archetype. Solly Blue is a fictive archetype. Both have archetypal coincidental adventures, just as have I in shooting video erotica; but Solly Blue is not based personally on David Hurles. In the prison-themed issue of *Drummer* 21, the character named O'Riley in the "Prison Blues: Confessions of a Prison-Tour Junkie" feature is, of course, David Hurles whom I took with me on a special late night tour inside San Quentin. That prison piece is totally accurate journalism—totally accurate reportage of what happened to the two of us that night on our impressionist tour of San Quentin, which, to David Hurles besotted with his delinquent boys, was like a tour of the Vatican..

David Hurles from the mid-1960s onwards shot black-and-white photographs which he developed in 5x7 format in his own darkroom. He also shot color transparencies and Super-8 movies. Actually, in the early to late 1970s, he was most famous for his mail-order business selling audio tapes recorded by tough guys adlibbing into a tape recorder. David had gotten the idea for audio sex tapes while lying in a cubicle at the baths and staring up at the ceiling through the fence wire over the cubicle, and listening to the ruzzabuzza whispers and cries of sex from other men in other cubicles. Before there was erotic video, Old Reliable sold his erotic audio recordings whose essence of wandering and disinfranchised young men is as fine a documentary as any of the WPA work of recording migrant workers suffering in the Great Depression of the 1930s.

In December 1979, one of David's hustlers—maybe his famous model-son "Dan"—gifted him with a brand new, but hot (stolen) video camera. David seized the opportunity. (Except for Andy Warhol to whom Sony gave a video camera and recorder in 1966, hardly anyone in gay culture had a video camera before consumer video camera were introduced in 1982 at about the same time HIV was also introduced.) So in March 1980, I put David in my car and we drove to Oakland to tape a bodybuilding contest, and later drove to my country house which we videotaped. When I first looked through the lens of David's video camera, I said with glee, "This is the Devil's Tool" I had been shooting silent Super-8 film epics for twenty years. All of the gay 1960s and Titanic 1970s was shot on silent film. Video brought improved image and actual sound into gay culture. David immediately embraced the new visual medium because he could simultaneously photograph the images and record the drawling, drop-dead voices of his outlaw "boys," ex-cons, and hustlers.

Unsure of what the reception to his reality video might be, David was reluctant to edit onto one feature-length tape the best of four or five models he had shot. The first gay video critics made the mistake that gay video should have the formal qualities of a big-budget MGM production; they did not understand video verite. In May of 1980, David returned to our house north of the Golden Gate Bridge. Dan and his girlfriend Carla drove him in a car David had rented. David had been reluctant to edit his first tape out of all his footage. During that weekend, Mark Hemry and I locked David into our bedroom and would not let him out until he completed his edit. He emerged with a video numbered as "0001" upon which he built his genius-brand name of Old Reliable Video. Old Reliable, who had been a major hit in audio and still photography, caught the wave and became an instant classic in the new gay video industry. David understood that video is not film; he was not afraid to let the camera run footage; he was not adverse to experimentation. In fact, one of the great joys of Old Reliable videos is hearing David in his off-screen voice talking to his models, urging them onto deeper revelations, deeper eros.

When on December 31, 1979, I exited from *Drummer* as run by John Embry, David Hurles in effect left with me. Publisher John Embry blacklisted David for his allegiance to me,

even though I had not asked him to forsake Embry who never understood David's photography. David never appeared in John Embry's *Drummer* again, and both of us joined together with John Rowberry when Rowberry himself fled *Drummer* and began producing magazines for Modernismo Publications.

Before John W. Rowberry took over the Modernismo magazines, those magazines had for more than five years been packaged by Bob Johnson who, since 1979, had been publishing my writing in their pages. Johnson had written to me care of *Drummer*, said he was a fan, and asked if I'd write freelance for him for the several new magazines he was starting up for publisher George Mavety. The magazines as they appeared were titled: *Uncut*, *Inches*, *Skin*, *Just Men*, *Williams Higgins' California Magazine*, *Expose*, *Hooker*, etc. The actually very sweet Bob Johnson lived in a Hollywood bungalow dramatically overlooking Santa Monica Boulevard where Mark Hemry and I several times took business meetings with him tweaking off the ceiling. Bob Johnson had a very bad coke addiction, and was terrible at paying me. I have years of letters between us: he asking me for more writing; me begging to be paid.

So I was happy when Rowberry came on board with Mavety, because he paid on time for my fiction and features. By the late mid-80s, my work with Johnson folded into work with Rowberry with whom I reunited David Hurles who contributed photographs in return for commercial advertising and video reviews concocted by John Rowberry.

Rowberry, as much as I liked him—and worked with him for nearly twenty years—was at best an efficient talent at packaging magazines. He was frankly a weak writer and a really rather terrible media reviewer who never really ever understood how video was not film, or that most gay men really did not want videos of models pretending to be chicken under 18. What Rowberry knew was that David Hurles' Old Reliable could fill out his chicken layouts with hundreds of truly dependable photographs of blue-collar young men. In the twenty years that Rowberry and I worked together, we never once went out to coffee together nor ever went to the other's home.

Anyway, David and I, as great good friends, and media professionals, both knew how to drive this silly little interview for a bit of information and entertainment fun. The interview existed as a chance for me to get him to open up a bit about how he worked; but mostly it existed as a text to wrap around twenty or so of his choice photographs, which, of course, was free advertising for his videos.

Old Reliable's photographs of tough guys, ex-cons, and working-class men ideally reflect several invisible groups in gay culture: white trash, ex-cons, blacks, and Latinos. The marginalized lower-classes have always had an irresistible appeal to the gay middle and upper-classes. Bourgeois *Drummer* readers, beginning with issue 20 and ending with 30, made Old Reliable an instant star.

In this interview, David and I tried to be provocative, and a bit self-satirical, as well as pay homage to our mutual hero and pal, the great underground sex journalist of the 1970s, Boyd MacDonald, who wrote the best 'zine of the 1970s, *Straight to Hell: The Manhattan Review of Unnatural Acts*.

This interview is a companion piece to my feature essay about David Hurles and his erotic courtship of dangerous sex criminals titled "Terror Is My Only Hardon" which was published in *Skin Magazine* Volume 2 #5 as "Old Reliable: The Company That Dirty Talk Built"; and *California Action Guide* Volume 1 #3, September 1982; and in *Man2Man Quarterly* #8, 1981.

Actually, David and I never ever sat in a formal interview. Our lives were connected by telephone lines. The truth is that I wrote both these Old Reliable pieces. I based the content on the thousands of three-times daily phone calls David and I lingered over. Then I showed the pieces to David for his *imprimatur*. He was always so open to me that he had already answered any question I might ask, and he always (usually) liked what I voiced for him because I knew him so well.

Over the years, I published more than 200 of David Hurles' Old Reliable photographs in *Drummer*, *California Action Guide*, and *Man2Man*—most notably Tico Patterson on *Man2Man* #4, the tattooed bicep-ual "Star" on *Man2Man* #6 (the 1st Anniversary Issue), and blond Paul Houston on *Man2Man* #8. *Man2Man* #8 featured, besides the front cover, 12 more photographs

by Old Reliable, including the back cover.

In the total run of all eight issues of *Man2Man*, there were approximately 400 pages on which many an Old Reliable photograph enlivened my gray written text. © 2004 Jack Fritscher

**Interview as published in
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Jack Fritscher: When you were a young boy, did you let dirty old men in their 20's suck your dick and ass? You were once photographed in an act of auto-fellatio.

Old Reliable/David Hurles: I wish dirty old men had approached me when I was a young boy. Instead, I had to settle for other young boys, who really weren't that good. Even as an adolescent, I had my eyes on several older guys, but had a hell of a time scoring. Yes, I once could blow myself.

Jack Fritscher: You are now one of the principal photographers of male sex objects—pieces of trade, male whores, ex-cons, street trash, and so on. Were you once a sex object or piece of trade yourself?

Old Reliable: I have been, in that I have appeared in movies and magazines [in the late 1960s, with Guild Press, Washington D. C.]. But it has been 10 years ago. I have always been flattered when treated like trade. But I don't try too hard to be a sex object anymore. There are so many good sex objects around these days. I prefer to employ them.

Jack Fritscher: How often do you jack off?

Old Reliable: Nowadays only once—well, one-and-a-half times—a day unless I'm suffering from anxiety. Then I do more.

Jack Fritscher: Pornography cures depression. What kind of sex do you like?

Old Reliable: I prefer sucking, getting fucked, and rimming. I am a rim-freak. I am into assorted games, and humiliation when I hire desirable tough guys to bully me sexually.

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Jack Fritscher: Do you like soapy or smelly guys? Clean balls and assholes, or their natural fragrance?

Old Reliable: A couple of my boys live in bushes which makes them homeless. I really get off on natural smells sweat, and sweaty teeshirts, and uncut cock that showered yesterday. But I am turned off by filth. Why do poor boys always have stinky feet? As a rimmer, I prefer clean assholes. The balls can smell any way they want as long as they're bouncy. Many young men have used my shower to clean up. It's one of my social services.

Jack Fritscher: Do you have sex with the pricks you photograph?

Old Reliable: Yes. 99% of the time. It is part of the deal, although if they're real good, sometimes I'll give them a few extra bucks. I always pay for the pictures. Sometimes extra for the sex. Not usually. I always spell it out up front. I've had to threaten to cancel a few shootings with recalcitrant models, but I offer a package deal and they always see the light when threatened with loss of the shooting fee. When I don't have sex, it usually has to do with the smell in the room after shooting. If it's too gross, I just send them on their way. I'm still into quality. Being a prick is just not enough.

Jack Fritscher: Where do you find models?

Old Reliable: Often right on the street, sometimes hustler ads, but mostly by referral from other models satisfied with their own experience.

Jack Fritscher: How do you proposition them?

Old Reliable: Money is the key.

Jack Fritscher: What percent of your models are 100% homosexual?

Old Reliable: About 20%.

Jack Fritscher: What percent are 100% "straight?"

Old Reliable: About 50%. My joys. The remainder are mixed. Pieces of trade fall within that 80%. Whores tend to be a problem. They are too into money, always in a hurry, frequently too spent to be any good, and most of them are crooks. Most of my models find the money important but ego is involved in over half the cases. It is important for a guy to be admired, and "straight" guys get a whole lot less of that reinforcement than gays. Women just don't bother to admire their men. Whores are like children. They cling, demand, steal, depend. Recently a kid, a hustler, I had known for four months—a kid I had supported let's say here—said "goodbye" by stealing a brand new camera worth \$250. But they're all like that these days. Whores are thieves. Fortunately, my trade contingent is altogether different from the hustler-whores and really is just a bunch of horny guys who are bored with their old ladies and want nothing more than a little male companionship and some good relaxed recreational sex.

Jack Fritscher: What kind of underpants do you wear?

Old Reliable: Jockey shorts.

Jack Fritscher: What about your models?

Old Reliable: Most models wear no shorts.

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Jack Fritscher: Are any of them so horny they have a hardon when they pull their pants off?

Old Reliable: Usually it has to be worked up. I can't tell you the ecstasy it gives me to see them already hard when they strip. It happens far too seldom.

Jack Fritscher: How are their hardons worked up?

Old Reliable: I keep some dirty magazines around, plus a warm mouth.

Jack Fritscher: Are your models clean or dirty?

Old Reliable: The typical model has sweaty armpits (nice), and a clean dick; the asshole can go either way—and disgustingly filthy feet. An awful lot of “straight” boys who are trade have an absolute cleanliness fetish. Whores are the dirtiest. Too many gay whores still have some stranger's saliva dangling from their dick. The straight trade guys are not like that.

Jack Fritscher: What positions do you prefer for cocksucking?

Old Reliable: Except for my regular Guatemalan trick, who has been coming for over four years (and cuming with great velocity), and who likes to do it every possible way, I usually do it with all the lights on, in front of a large mirror. Mostly I just suck them off with them lying back on the bed, and myself between their legs kneeling. Easy to creep into rimming from there too. If I get very tired with a slow cumer, then I lie beside him and suck leaning over. If they show any aptitude whatever, I get them to kneel over me as I lie on my back and they fuck my face.

Jack Fritscher: Do you think blow jobs are hard work?

Old Reliable: This is important. I like a guy who cums quickly. I get bored if I have to suck a long time and my jaws get quite tired. I'd much rather give two quick ones than one long one. However I can eat ass for hours and never tire.

Jack Fritscher: Do you think many pieces of trade are homosexuals who don't like to suck and are tough enough to act the part of trade?

Old Reliable: I think you're onto something there. On the other hand, there are a lot of cocksuckers who could pass for trade. One other thing: most trade, new to the scene, really do want to try sucking and taking it up their ass, if only to persuade themselves that that is not what they want.

Jack Fritscher: Are the pricks you photograph naughty-but-nice types, or are they authentic bastards?

Old Reliable: Most are real pricks and rotten bastards. I wish it were otherwise.

Jack Fritscher: Do any of your models like to act arrogant?

Old Reliable: Too few. I prefer the bully type. The ones who have really got it usually don't flaunt it.

Jack Fritscher: Do your models like to call you names during sex?

Old Reliable: Ex-cons are good at this. Usually *punk*, *bitch*, *faggot*, *queer*. The tapes I make are full of this stuff. It's a turn-on. I like dirty talk within the sexual playlet. I didn't like it the other day when a good-looking young blond guy passed me on the street and said rather more

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informationally than threateningly, “You faggots are all going to die.” How true. But so is he.

Jack Fritscher: How do your models act with each other when they cross paths in your living room?

Old Reliable: Most are not comfortable with each other when in my presence, since our relationship is so separate from the dealing they must have with each other.

Jack Fritscher: Are they narcissists?

Old Reliable: Seldom. I wish they were. I get off on them posing, but you practically have to flog them to get them to show off. Cultural conditioning. The ones with tattoos and with muscles like to pose and strut in front of the mirror and me with the camera.

Jack Fritscher: Do they know how to make themselves alluring by spreading their legs and so on or do you have to give directions?

Old Reliable: Most require direction. I give it. They ignore it. I yell. They understand that.

Jack Fritscher: Are the audio tapes you make of guys having sex an act, or are they natural?

Old Reliable: 50% natural. I try for the authentic. Customers who buy my audio tapes can usually tell. To sound like an ex-con, you have to be one.

Jack Fritscher: What is the economic class of your models?

Old Reliable: Blue collar or no collar, with an occasional Ph.D.

Jack Fritscher: What in your opinion constitutes good cocksucking?

Old Reliable: Eagerness. That’s all the flattery required.

Jack Fritscher: What kinds of things do guys say to you during sex that make you hot?

Old Reliable: “Lick my fullback thighs.”

Jack Fritscher: Do you like to undress your models?

Old Reliable: No.

Jack Fritscher: Where are your models from?

Old Reliable: All over. I’ve had graduates of the prisons from North Carolina, all the way across the South, and from every prison and juvenile facility in California.

Jack Fritscher: What kind of trouble have you had?

Old Reliable: The only trouble I’ve had with the boys is that they steal. A trick pulled a .22 on me and took \$100 last February 1, but I must add that he was worth it, sexually. He was 19 or so, just out of San Quentin, blond, tattooed, muscular, verbal, and had a huge hardon waiting when he dropped his pants. I’ve seen a few other guns. Who counts knives? A kid tried to blackmail me back in March, but I said no. In 1972 I was busted three times in one week by the San Francisco police on trumped-up charges. That cost me a lot of money and got on my nerves, but I survived. In 1969 I was in a male house of prostitution in L.A. when it was raided; we all went

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briefly to jail.

Jack Fritscher: Have you had sex with the classical love objects: cops, sailors, Marines, soldiers, firemen, hard hats, truck drivers, guys who lead a “straight” married life?

Old Reliable: All of them. I still prefer ex-cons.

Jack Fritscher: Do your men like women?

Old Reliable: Most like women as fuck of first choice but men for convenience. I understand them better than women and they know it.

Jack Fritscher: Does being photographed give your models a hardon?

Old Reliable: No.

Jack Fritscher: Do many of them have problems with impotence?

Old Reliable: Yes.

Jack Fritscher: Did you mess around with other boys when you were very young?

Old Reliable: I used to wrestle and we discovered that we liked one hold best: with our dicks between each other’s legs.

Jack Fritscher: Do you have numbers you can call if you want to have sex?

Old Reliable: Yes, but it used to be much better. Seems like they all want to keep their numbers secret and call me, usually at a very inconvenient time.

Jack Fritscher: Are you ever in bad heat and need sex badly?

Old Reliable: Yes, at times I need it badly, but sedation by drugs will erase it if no cock is available.

Jack Fritscher: What do you do during your leisure time?

Old Reliable: TV, read, go to wrestling, go to boxing, shoot video tapes.

Jack Fritscher: Are you usually successful in approaching a guy in the street and propositioning him for a modeling and sex session?

Old Reliable: Yes, most of the time.

Jack Fritscher: Do you ever get a sore throat and asshole from sex?

Old Reliable: Of course.

Jack Fritscher: Do many of your models have contempt for you or for homosexuality?

Old Reliable: The contempt when it exists is pretty well disguised. I like bullies, I won’t tolerate real contempt. Why should I? There’s plenty more where they came from.

Jack Fritscher: Have you heard of many of your models getting into trouble?

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Old Reliable: Two went to prison for murder. At least one died on a motorcycle. Others have gone to jail for lesser crimes. They are a tragic lot. My biggest problem has been trying to keep my feelings divorced from the pathetic lives of the models.

Jack Fritscher: In one of your brochures, you mention a model who likes to humiliate his partners. Is this compensation for feeling queer?

Old Reliable: He does this because he is making \$25, and because it is something he does well, and because he is new at being queer and probably is reflecting on all the things he learned to think about queers before he realized he was one; he likes to get fucked in the ass. He suggests things like hiding your clothes so you have to walk home naked and says little kids will point at your small cock and call you queer and that if you want to know what a real man looks like look at him. He suggests that anyone who would swallow his cum is really sick. And so forth.

Jack Fritscher: You also mention in one of your brochures that one of your favorites is a Puerto Rican. Tell us about him.

Old Reliable: He would do anything and did not steal. He did not need to be talked into anything. If you said, "Sit on my face," he would do it. And enjoy it. He was an ex-Marine wounded in Vietnam. His old lady was in jail for hooking. He was clean and he was honest.

Jack Fritscher: You mention one as being "trade deluxe." What was so "deluxe" about him?

Old Reliable: He was 6-5, 21 years old, natural blond, very well built, and an ex-con. He really likes pussy and hustles to both sexes. He can get it up. He works very hard to please, but he won't suck and he won't get fucked. He seems honest. As hot as he is, simply lying there would be enough, but he will get into any position you want. He has a very deep voice, so anything he says carries weight. He holds your head down on his cock when you're sucking. He isn't really trade, I guess, since trade is doing it for convenience or pleasure. He does it for money. He really is "straight." He has no desire to suck a cock or get fucked. He has about 8". Pussy gives him a hardon. His whole trip is money as far as guys go, but he does it well.

Jack Fritscher: You mention that one of your models is a "psycho first-class." In what way?

Old Reliable: I was the first guy to ever suck him off. He was living with a chick who was supporting him. He was an ex-collegiate swimmer. He wouldn't let me lick his asshole. He got very uptight so I backed off. He had been washed out of the Air Force because he was stoned and wrecked one of their airplanes. One night he came by very late and was very stoned. He kept insisting that I owed him more money for his pictures. It might have got ugly, but I was not alone. It may have been drugs. He was so beautiful, truly, but dangerous, I suspect: a murderer. Another really beautiful kid I met in Union Square and asked to model came home with me and held an ice pick to my temple and robbed me. He wanted to lock me in the closet, but I refused, so he just fled.

Jack Fritscher: What is your next sex trip?

Old Reliable: I've just finished editing together the best of my boys on videotape. Color-and-sound jerkoff stuff. Very hot. From my private reserve. Old Reliable will now have moving pictures. Why not? Video, especially erotic video is an art form whose time has come. This is Hollywood. I'm the dirty old man you've always heard about who pulls up to a guy on the curb and says, "Hey, kid! You want me to make you a star?" © 1982, 2004 Jack Fritscher