

Crosscurrents

BY WICKIE STAMPS

I'm an anti-star type girl. You know, the one who can tick off all the stars she hates. This week, I've been bitching about Madonna. I've been threatenibg to write an "I Hate Madonna" column. Like I said, I'm a no-star type of girl — until today that is. After mulling it over (and also being too cowardly to trash Ms. NOT) I realized I *do* have my stars.

First there's Mrs. Jessica Fletcher, my favorite snoopy sleuth on *Murder She Wrote*. I'm also quite fond of Della Street, Perry Mason's gal friday. I guess they are my Mom's. Belatedly, (as I was missing in action for a decade or two) my younger punk friends have me scoping out Patti Smith. Totally cool. (She definitely tops Twiggy who also I adored).

As a child I grew up watching Johnny Carson (which, by the way, I wept at his final show). There I met and fell in love with Andy Warhol's superstars. They, long and lean from their most recent amphetamine run, would chat about being hung from walls at star-studded NYC bashes. So, my aspiration in life was to be a superstar wall-hanging.

I was also totally crushed out on dear, dear sissy Truman Capote. (Although I always took it personally when he'd show up shit-faced on national TV — which was always and no one mentioned he was gay). But I would have died at the opportunity to attend Capote's famous Black and White ball.

Through late night TV I fell in love with "my" gangsters — Edward G. Robinson topping the list. And then there was mad, mad Peter Lorre. God, was he wonderful!

was) a Jackie Gleason fan. "One of these days I'm gonna be a bigshot, Alice!"

But then there are my personal stars, ones I had lost in my own memory. There was Gloria, a thin black woman who when I went to work at Beth Israel Hospital as a nurse's aid had already been there for ten years. In her late forties, she was also as aide. I used to watch her, night after night, quietly completing her back-breaking assignments. She never complained, never said a word. I knew her husband was a drunk. She hoped one day to be a nurse but somehow we both knew it was to be a dream deferred. I moved on. She just became more stopped.

Then, there was my crazy Mohawk dyke friend. She was my boss and head of Indian Health Services when I worked there. Day after day, year after year, she'd find shelter for homeless Indians and scrounge up welfare cheese and Thanksgiving chickens (donated by Digital in Digital boxes). She also fought a lone battle to force the Indian leadership to address AIDS. And she'd tirelessly meet with well-meaning whites whose stream would ebb and flow with how fashionable the "Indian cause" was that year. Patiently, she'd explain the needs of the community to these do-gooders. Invariably, the whites (I among them), confronted with the dissemination of a culture, burned out and moved on. But my friend is still there hiring Indian kids who ran away from their adopted white parents, arranging rides for the elders and patiently talking to whites who want to help.

There are more, many more, stars in my life — if only I'd let their spirits free.

So, maybe I don't really hate Madonna.