

EXPRESSION

THE MAGAZINE FOR AMERICAN EXPRESS PLATINUM AND GOLD CARDMEMBERS

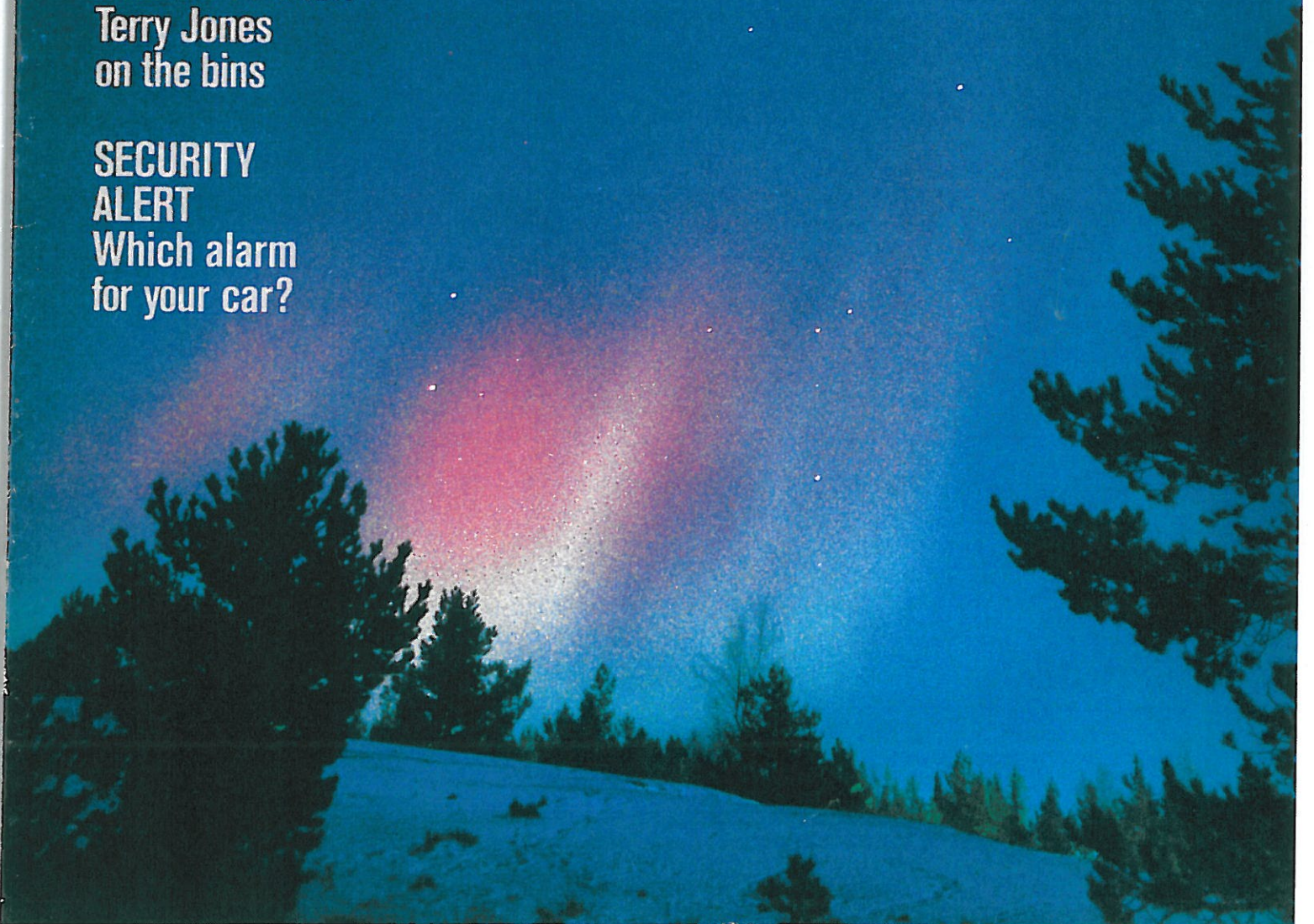
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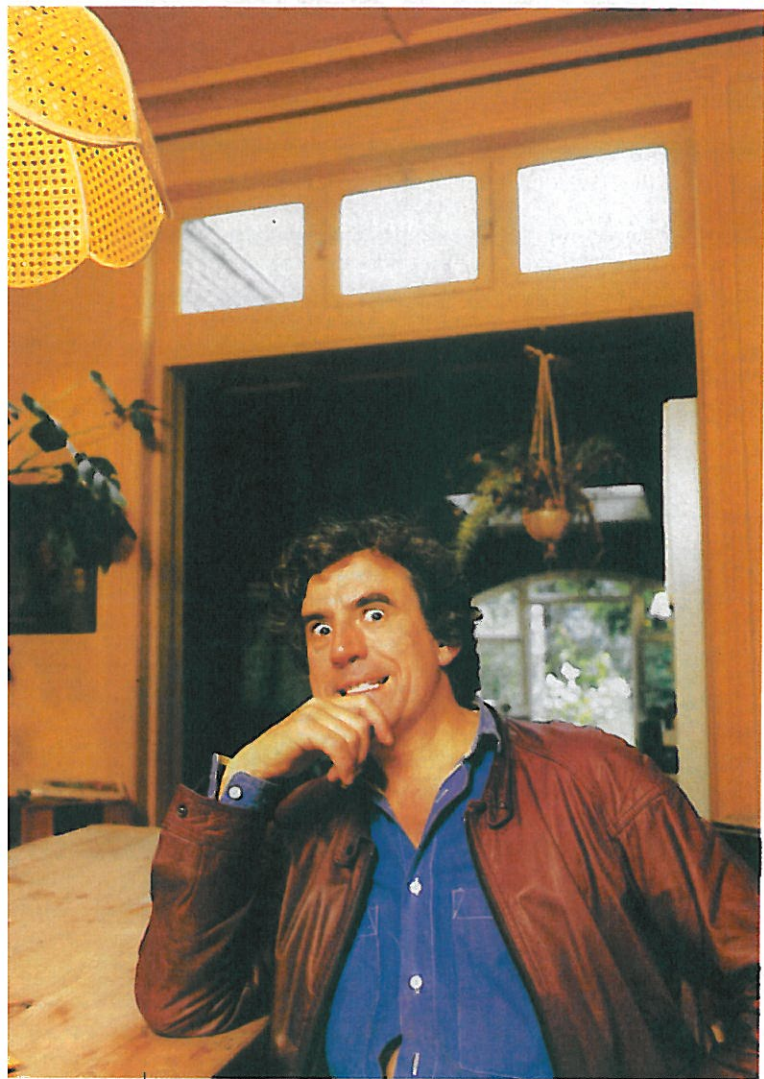
FINLAND'S NORTHERN LIGHTS

WILL CARLING
Revealed by his writing

**BEFORE
MONTY PYTHON**
Terry Jones
on the bins

**SECURITY
ALERT**
Which alarm
for your car?





Film director, writer and Monty Python star Terry Jones, talks to Tessa Souter about how he looked at the other side of life - as a dustman

TERRY JONES

BRIEF HISTORY

Born: 1942, North Wales. **Educated:** Royal Grammar School, Guildford; St Edmund Hall, Oxford. **1965-1967** worked in BBC Light Entertainment Script Department. **1969-1974** starred in *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. **Has written several screenplays. Films as director include *Monty Python's Life of Brian, Meaning of Life and Personal Services.* Author of several books for children, including *Fantastic Stories* which was published last autumn.**

My first job was as a dustman in Cobham in the early 1960s during one of my Oxford vacations. It was rather jolly. They were good chaps and there was a real feeling of camaraderie. Even though we were doing a reasonably unpleasant job it wasn't too bad as everybody worked together in a sort of team.

I'd never done anything so physical before. Those were the days when you emptied the house bin into your own bin and then carried that out to the cart - long before plastic bags and

things. And until I got the hang of all the lifting and hoiking of the bin on to the shoulder it was quite painful. The hours were 7am until 4pm and I remember wondering how I was going to survive for two weeks.

The first week went on forever. It was just an eternity of time, going round from house to house emptying dustbins. But the second week went in a flash because at every stage in the day you knew exactly where you were. Your whole week was

programmed for you geographically. Your 11 o'clock tea break was when you got to the end of that road there, and lunch was when you got to the green or wherever.

The other thing I found was that I started looking at houses in a totally different way. I suddenly realised that I'd always looked at them from the front door outwards. But after a couple of weeks I found I was always looking for the side door or the door where the dustbins are. I still do it sometimes. Or I think, 'Oh I'm just looking at front doors instead of side doors'.

Also I noticed the obvious difference between houses with money and houses without. In the affluent roads the rubbish was very brightly coloured - all packaging and plastic bags, tins and boxes for games and toys and luxuries. But as you went down the wage structure the dustbins became much drearier and drabber until you got to some of the old age pensioners' and there was nothing in them. You might have tea leaves and a couple of tins of cat food and that was that. It was dustbins and Geoffrey Chaucer which made me politically aware. Until then I'd been quite apolitical really.

I did other jobs for the council. There's a ditch along the right-hand side of a stretch of road called the Straight Mile in between Claygate and the roundabout just off the Kingston Bypass. I dug that ditch. Me and one other person. But the bins paid the best.

What did I learn? I learned to like dustmen a lot. Some of our local dustmen have been coming here for 20 years and I know them all. I suppose once a dustman always a dustman - at heart. □