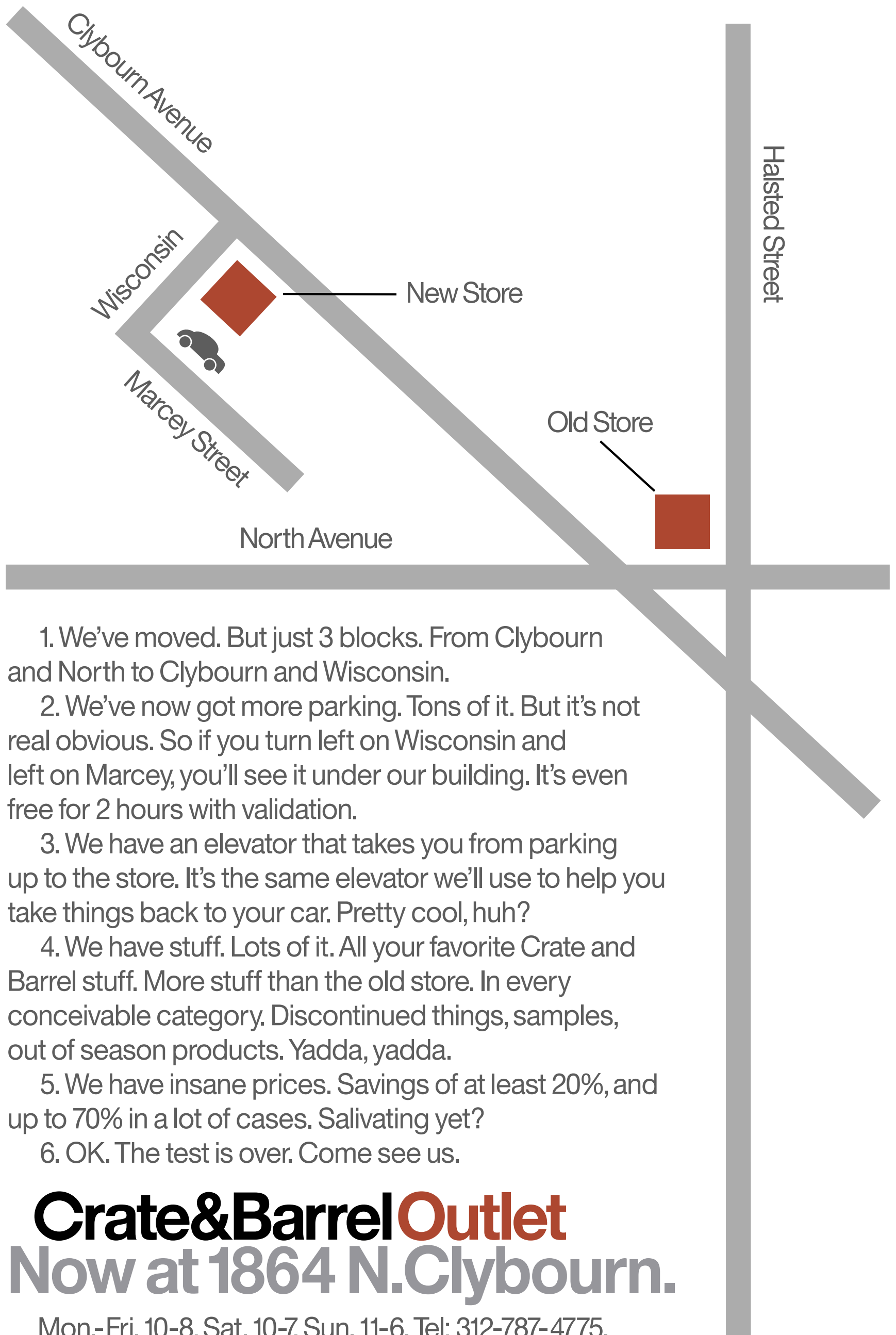


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Letters

Remembering a Friend

The Chicago musical community lost three great men on Thursday. Michael Dahlquist, John Glick, and Doug Meis were killed at an intersection in Skokie while on their lunch break from their day jobs. The outpouring of emotion from their friends and peers in the last few days is testament to what terrific guys they were. One of them, Dahlquist, was like a brother to me, as he was to a lot of people, and I wanted to say something publicly about him.

When I think of Michael Dahlquist, two images spring to mind. First, I imagine him drumming; he was a fantastic drummer. He played drums for Silkworm, a great band, and he played with titanic gusto. Arms swinging high overhead, knees hopping up to his chin, he played like he was trying to break the damn things. Next, I imagine him dancing, because he danced big, and he would do it anywhere. He danced like he played the drums, with a recklessness bounded not by modesty, but by concern for other people's furniture. And his drums were huge. His special drum kit was a giant Slingerland from the swing era with a bass drum the size of a wagon wheel. He kept it in a pristine state of dilapidation, just as he found it, and this was his genius. His drums often resided at the studio where I work, and countless other drummers, intrigued by their immensity, would sit behind them and try to play them. Some famous, some greatly skilled, some merely curious, these pretenders all fell short. Like a demanding lover, this Stonehenge of drums would not yield to just anyone, but required the touch, the experience of her true mate to respond with affection. These drums sounded like shit when played by anyone other than Michael.

But Michael was an artist on them. He belonged to these drums in the same way they belonged to him. Michael made half a dozen of Silkworm's albums on them, and he sounded like thunder. Michael Dahlquist was a big, beautiful guy. Tall and fit, everything about him was large. Huge hands, giant smile full of big teeth, riotous laugh, bold, friendly voice (bolder and friendlier if he'd had a couple or if you were a cute girl), and enormous

**Michael Dahlquist**

heart. He wore his enormous heart on his sleeve—no, not on his sleeve. He was shirtless often enough. Sometimes pantless. He wore his heart instead of sleeves, like a frock coat. With the wrong sort of person, such a thing can be a drag. With a needy or petulant person, or someone who wants you to mark his every mood swing and spend your energy helping him get over them. That's not what I mean. Michael had no swing in his mood. Michael was continuously aglow.

I'm going to try to explain something specific about Michael, so bear with me, because unless you've experienced it you might think I'm being coy here. Michael enjoyed literally everything that ever happened to him. Everything was a marvel to him—a moment of discovery, of novelty and insight to be celebrated with an openmouthed laugh. I mean everything. The best coffee, the shittiest gig, the cutest waitress, the worst hangover, the most awesome video store, the worst unrequited crush—all of it was worth discovering, laughing about, and genuinely reveling in. An unremarkable afternoon was worth reveling in because it was the most unremarkable afternoon, ever.

I am in a band, and my band played many shows with Silkworm. On a tour of western

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How Michael lived is what I want to remember: shirtless, raging, grinning, blissed-out, hollering, dancing without propriety, rolling around in ecstasy with a lust for every moment like a puppy dog in a leaf pile.

Canada (worst coffee ever) we witnessed the birth of a forest fire (most amazing natural disaster ever) from the parking lot of a hamburger stand that didn't offer ice for its drinks (worst concession ever). Later, in Winnipeg, after both bands had played (most inappropriate crowd behavior ever), Michael disappeared with some filly (best crazy broad ever) and spent the night dancing at an impromptu speakeasy in a neighborhood apartment building. He returned while it was still dark to our flop-house accommodations (most tragic hotel ever), and shortly we all discovered that someone had set a dozen Dumpsters behind the hotel on fire, and that we might all be burned to death. That didn't happen, so it was the best weird day on tour ever.

Michael died in the company of friends, Doug Meis and John Glick, and they died with him. I'm sad to say I didn't know them well, because I know they were the best guys ever. The people who loved them say so, and because they were there with Michael, I know it's true. How they died is unimportant. Tragic and stupid (they died because someone else's death wish involved crashing her car into theirs), but unimportant. How Michael lived is what I want to remember: shirtless, raging, grinning, blissed out, hollering, dancing without propriety, rolling around in ecstasy with a lust for every moment like a puppy dog in a leaf pile.

Michael, I know you aren't here to read this, but I'm saying it so I can tell everyone else, on the chance that you already knew it: I love you like a brother, and I wish I could be as embroiled in the moment (for one moment even) as thoroughly as you were every day you were alive.

Requiescat in pace, Mikey.
 Salut!

Steve Albini
 W. Belmont

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