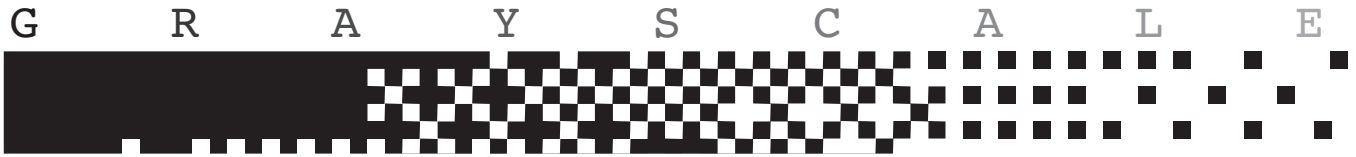


The illusion of gray created
by an arrangement of
alternating black and white dots



This is Grayscale #26, a zine for *Intercourse*, and an Obsessive Press Publication 260, from Jeanne Gomoll, 2825 Union Street, Madison Wisconsin 53704-5136. 608-246-8857. ArtBrau@globaldialog.com



I've made several attempts to write a mini-biography for *Intercourse*, but it kept coming out sounding rather stilted and résumé formal. So I thought I'd just go into a little more detail, this time, on life in general...

▣ Outside

“They call it the great outdoors, but I call it the sucky outdoors.” That is the opinion of Forrest Kiefer-Hailman, the young son of two local fans. So far, Forrest hasn't been enjoying his time at summer camp. I'm still laughing at his pronouncement, but I have to agree that we've had some truly sucky weather in the past few months. The high heat and drenching humidity has made me sigh with relief when I escape back into our air conditioned house or when I lock up my bike at work and escape into the office building, mopping perspiration from my brow as I go.

But there have been lovely days, too. And as long as I leave for work fairly early, the heat usually isn't too bad in the morning. I've been enjoying my bike commutes and wouldn't give them up even on the worst of the hot days. It's weird though: I wrote last year about the sunflower forests along the bike path, but they're gone this year, except for the occasional, scattered plants. No huge sunflower stands bleeding yellow into the air. I don't know why. Maybe the market for sunflower seeds fell along with the stock market. Maybe sunflower plants deplete the soil in some way and experienced gardeners know better than to plant them in successive years? But the prairie alongside the other side of the bike path has more than made up for the decrease in color in the gardens. I've never seen such a profusion and variety of different wild flowers and color as this prairie has showcased this year. After the gardens/prairie part of my bike commute to work, my route has been detoured from the straight-line route downtown by the city, which is doing some utility work alongside part of the bike path. I'm a little irritated by how long the work is taking. Car drivers wouldn't tolerate a main commuting road knocked out of commission for three months or more merely for utility work. It's not as if some futuristic overpass system is being installed... I shouldn't be grumpy though. My detour has been interesting in itself. I'm riding through an older area of the city, with houses that were mostly built around the turn of the century and are now very popular among people returning to the city and looking for older houses to renovate. So far, the neighborhood has kept out large-scale condominium developments and the area still feels like a cohesive, mixed-income, diverse neighborhood. But it's amazing to see the run-down houses gradually being replaced with lovingly detailed homes and immaculately cared-for yards. I spent a lot of time in that neighborhood as a student when I went to school at the UW-Madison and it's interesting to study it during my bike rides

The images printed in my last zine showing the two hunting/fishing brochure covers (showing pre- and post-9/11 consciousness) didn't print very well in my last issue. And there were a couple translation problems with the .pdf file I sent to Debbie and I don't understand why that happened. So, here some better images. The top pic is the first brochure cover art showing a turkey hunter wearing full turkey-hunting gear, carrying a big gun, looking like some sort of backyard terrorist. The bottom pic is the replacement photo showing vaguely military-type state workers doing some sort of manly work in a stream.

and see how it continues to change. In addition, this route has more hills than the bike path, and that's good for me.

Scott and I are planning a camping trip for the week after Labor Day. It's about all we can afford this year for a holiday since we've spent so much lately on house renovations and a trip to Readercon for the Tiptree Award ceremony, not to mention an unexpected car repair bill. Are there any other kinds? I'm looking forward to some time on Rock Island in Lake Michigan, or possibly taking the Lake Michigan ferry across the lake and camping along the eastern shore of Lake Michigan and north of Lake Superior. We'll see. We've got to make plans soon.

Have non-Midwest newspapers been covering the Wisconsin deer problem much? It's been almost constant headlines here in Madison, at times rivaling the news about corporate bankruptcies and plunging stock markets. Earlier this year, a handful of white-tailed deer in southwest Wisconsin were found dying of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and it's been decided that the deer herd in southern Wisconsin needs to be destroyed. Entirely. It is believed that infected deer were introduced from Wyoming or Colorado, where the mule deer population has been infected with CWD for several years. No one knows for sure how the disease is spread though studies out west seem to indicate that direct deer-to-deer contact is essential. It is suspected that originally, infected deer were probably imported by game farm owners, who are still protesting attempts to enforce testing programs and animal health standards on the farms. (Actually the whole situation is frequently described with a lot of the same vocabulary used to describe the Enron and WorldCon debacles.) The current plan is to wipe out all deer in the infected area by extending the normal November two-week hunting season to a three-month season (October through December). It's going to be a dangerous time for residents in the area; hunters always end up shooting a few cattle, pets and people accidentally during the regular season. I can't imagine what it's going to be like this year, almost like living in a war zone I suppose. Hunters will be encouraged to take as many deer as they can find. Previously illegal "unsportsmanlike" hunting methods will be allowed. The state is even considering hiring sharpshooters and letting them hunt from helicopters if the volunteer hunters don't kill enough deer. It is hoped that the hunt will destroy 25,000 deer, and then we'll wait to see results from forensic tests on deer killed. Will CWD turn out to affect more deer than those living in the so-called "hot zone"? What are we going to do with the carcasses? The repercussions could be fairly massive for the people who live in or near "Ground Zero," and for the Department of Natural Resources which is being held responsible for most of the decisions and actions in response to CWD. The tourism industry will definitely be affected and the dairy industry is shaking in its boots, waiting to find out if CWD can "caught" by cattle. And we still don't

know if there will be repercussions to human health. CWD has similarities to Mad Cow Disease (or Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease), but so far there is no scientific evidence that there is any danger to humans. But of course, we've all heard *that* phrase all too often from corporations and government agencies. Sigh. We're waiting.

▣ Home

Things are going well at home. Both Scott's and my health is fine, though we both need to do more exercise. I'm going to go back to swimming in the winter after it gets too cold to bike to work. All of the downtown pools are closed, so it will mean that I will have to use the car if I want to regularly swim before going to work. I hate the thought of that; I much prefer biking or using public transportation. But I know from experience, that if it takes too much time or is too inconvenient, that I will make excuses more and more often for not going to the pool. Scott is still trying to figure out what he wants to do for exercise.

Scott and I go out to a movie together about once a week, we go to a monthly book discussion together, and we eat dinner together at home most nights. We have guests occasionally, but usually it's just the two of us. We trade off making bag lunches to take to work with us and we go out once or twice a week for dinner when I don't feel like cooking or as a treat. We enjoy a couple theater subscriptions -- Madison Rep Theater and American Players Theater. We go to APT with a large group of friends and several weekend evenings each summer we all drive out to the beautiful Spring Green area, climb to the top of a forested hill and watch Shakespeare (or Wilde or Marlowe or Shaw or Chekov) in the natural outdoors amphitheater. Scott and I go alone to Madison Rep plays on 7 or 8 Sunday nights during the fall and winter. And this year we hope to drive down to Chicago and see *Sweeney Todd* at the Lyric Opera. We'd like to increase our involvement with a local Green party, Progressive Dane but think that we're going to have to give something up in order to do that. We attend local SF group functions -- WisCon meetings, occasional parties, a low fat dinner group, and (just me) the Jane Austen reading group. We publish a joint zine (*Union Street*) for the local apa. Scott has volunteered to chair WisCon 27 next year and so we'll be even more involved in WisCon stuff than usual in the next year, and probably will put off regular attendance of Progressive Dane meetings for another year. We have a lot of fun doing all this stuff together, though every once in a while we talk about whether or not it's an entirely good thing that we so seldom do things separately with other people. Those conversations usually end with assurances from both of us that it would be fine if the other wants to do stuff with other people. But we don't actually cut down on doing the things we do together, and so there ends up not being much time

available for going stuff with other people. I don't know if this is a bad thing or not. I tend to not. I like my life quite a lot, and think Scott likes his too.

House

We had our house re-roofed in March and our upstairs bathroom was gutted and re-built in July.

The roof job went extraordinarily well. And we solved a mystery too. It turns out that the reason we were unable to get any roofers to work on our house last year was not (as we feared) that our roof is too steeply sloped, too high and just too hazardous. Instead, it turned out that, early in the 2001 season, a hailstorm many roofs in Madison. Our contractor told us that the insurance companies didn't even require bids in 2001, that they just faxed roofers with orders. The only possible way we could have gotten our house re-roofed last year would have been if we had accepted a bid immediately. The fact that we waited and compared bids doomed our efforts. But this year is different. The long, warm winter of 2001-02 enabled roofers to catch up completely on their backlog. Many of the companies hired workers in 2001 in order to take advantage of the weather and the demand. But this spring, they were all desperate to schedule new jobs; none of them had backlogs and many of them had extra employees. So, when we went bid-hunting this Spring, we got lots of offers and when we settled on a roofing company, they actually offered to begin our job *the very next day!* In fact it snowed that day and they didn't start tearing off our old roof a few days later, but they finished three days after they started and did a wonderful job. It was a complex job because we had three layers of shingles, plus a layer of shakes that had to be removed first. And then a plywood layer had to be installed before starting with the shingles. But we have a beautiful blue roof now, and because of a price war currently raging between the two main shingle manufacturers, our roof is guaranteed for 50 years (!). Even a postscript "oops" turned out well for us. When we pointed out that the company had forgotten to install the gutter guards we'd ordered, it turned out that the salesman had forgotten to add that (\$500) item to the estimate. When he realized his mistake, he insisted on installing them at no cost to us. That was nice. (Gutter guards screen gutters so that leaves don't clog them in the fall.)

Days after the last shingle was nailed onto our roof, we accepted a bid to gut and rebuild our upstairs bathroom. It was an old bathroom, built around the same time as our house in the early 1920s. Everything in it was old and nothing worked very well. The bathtub and sink plumbing was bad. The tub had no overflow drain. There was something seriously wrong with the floor, and we've always wanted to have a shower in the upstairs bathroom, because our bedroom is upstairs too.

The bathroom carpenter didn't work in nearly as efficient

a manner as the roofers did, but then he wasn't worried about a thunderstorm interrupting his work. We had the whole bathroom gutted but we were told that the bathtub was going to be the difficult part. Nevertheless we had no idea just *how* much trouble it would be. It was solid cast iron, coated with porcelain. Relatives of a local fan, Heidi Oliverson, owned our house before we did, and Heidi recalled her fond memories of taking baths in that old bathtub of ours. She asked us to let us know if we ever decided to get rid of the tub because she wanted it. Our contractor looked shocked when we mentioned this idea to him and declined to have anything to do with it. *"If your friend wants the tub, she will have to arrange for its removal herself. We want nothing to do with it. The only way WE are taking this tub out of your house is in PIECES."* Luckily when Heidi visited and inspected our bathroom she decided that this tub wasn't the tub she remembered. The tub of her memories had claw feet. *"Nope, that's not the one,"* she said. Good thing. It took a day and a half for the carpenter in charge of demolition to pound cracks into the cast iron and break the tub into pieces small enough to be lifted by one person and carried downstairs and out of the house. We saved a tiny piece of it, maybe 10" in circumference, as a souvenir. It weighs about 20 pounds. The carpenter estimated that the tub itself weighed well over a ton.

But the tub is gone now. The electrician and plumber did their work. And then the carpenter performed a miracle and managed to join the several portions of the floor into one level surface and installed the linoleum. And then the new tub/shower, closet, sink, toilet, and cabinets were installed, the walls were painted, and the new vinyl window was installed, (necessary because the window is inside the shower enclosure). Finally I had the fun job of picking out a matching shower curtain, rugs and towels.

But I'm afraid there were times in the course of the work on our bathroom that Scott and I could only stand in horror looking into that gutted room and say, "thank heaven it's not us." The bathroom floors hid lead pipes needing to be replaced and a sort of two-level, completely un-level floor that had to be fixed in some bizarre way we were actually never able to understand. But Mark (our carpenter) got it done and one day we came home and discovered that he had laid beautiful linoleum on top of the new floor and it all looked absolutely perfect. Gradually the fixtures were installed ... the new bath with the Corian surround, the oak linen closet and cabinets, the Corian sink and countertop, the new toilet. The color I chose looks beautiful. It's a fairly dark green, but next to the white tiles that cover the lower half of the walls, it doesn't seem dark at all. I'm VERY pleased. But also VERY glad we didn't attempt to do it ourselves. It was all over in about five weeks, just two weeks over estimate.

We'll probably be conducting tours up there for a while until we get used to it and come to our senses and realize that



it sounds sort of tacky to ask visitors if they want to come up and look at a toilet.

Oops, I almost forgot. Debbie says “we don’t discuss bathroom habits in the apa...”

▣ Readercon

Readercon was fun. There are parts of Readercon that remind me of WisCon and Potlatch -- especially the fact that many people regard programming as a highlight rather than a distraction from the main business of the convention. It’s a small con, under 600 people.

The program was very good, and I’m much more pleased by my performance on my panels at Readercon than I was about my work on WisCon 26 panels. Probably because I prepared extensively for the Readercon panels. I moderated several “all-star” panels at Readercon. “Feminist F&SF: the State of the Art, 2002” with Gwyneth Jones, Kelly Link, John Kessel and Laurie Marks was way too fascinating for the single hour allotted to it. The cast on the other panel, “The Aliens Among Us,” was equally stellar (Gwyneth Jones, Octavia Butler, Chip Delany, Toni Anzetti and Geary Gravel), but for some reason it was the feminist panel on which I worked hardest, possibly because I know Laurie to be such an excellent moderator and I wanted her to approve. Anyway both of them went really well, and Octavia Butler even complimented my moderation work extravagantly. I was quite pleased. The Tiptree ceremony happened at Readercon too, and we serenaded Hirimi Goto with a rousing rendition of “The Cucumber song” (which I found by typing in the words “cucumber” and “song” into google, and only had to change a little bit to make it work). Ellen Kushner provided musical guidance and in fact (a Tiptree first!) we actually rehearsed the song at a local Thai restaurant before the ceremony. It was probably the best-produced song

ever done at a Tiptree ceremony. Hirimi seemed to enjoy it. By the way, I hope you all get to meet her someday, she’s a delightful, funny, really nice woman. Here’s the song we sang:

Cucumber Song

(To the tune of Botany Bay)

*A restless young lady from Canada,
Developed a wonderful trend,
To purchase cucumbers for pleasure,
‘Cause she found they were better than men.*

*Chorus
So line up for your cucumbers, ladies,
They’re selling for two bucks apiece,
Your frustrated days are all over,
‘Cause cucumbers never get pissed.*

*In Thailand they’re eaten with chilis,
In Britain they’re put between bread,
But in Canada we use them as ‘jammies,
‘Cause we know that they’ll never want head.*

*They’ll never leave stains on the mattress,
They’re happy to live in the fridge,
The loo seat is never left standing,
And I’ve never seen cucumber kids.*

I’m still thinking about part of the discussion we had on the feminist panel at Readercon. At the panel, Gwyneth Jones said she was getting very tired of hearing people ask for “strong female characters.” I wish there had been more time to explore this topic in more depth. We did talk about how the threshold for feminist fiction has shifted over the years from a story with a female astrogator to one in which extrapolation on gender themes is much more complex. (I contended that feminism is an intrinsically radical, even revolutionary, philosophy and that any feminist with an SF background should not be able to ignore the implications of feminism which lead to a profoundly changed society.)

I think that there was a bit of confusion around vocabulary in the way different people use the term “strong woman character.” In my experience, the phrase is first of all a reaction to SF of the 40s and 50s and expresses a desire for more women characters with a critical role in the plot (and not just as a “love interest.”). It was also, in the early years of feminist SF, a reaction to the much too frequent portrayal of women characters as weak, silly and foolish plot devices who had to be rescued by the protagonist. But more and more, I hear people reacting to the phrase “strong female character,” as if there is some sort of fascist feminist police force out there demanding that all female characters be physically powerful, dominate

all relationships, and do all the rescuing if there is rescuing that needs doing. One can certainly find fiction that seems as if it were written from exactly that perspective, but I think we're getting to a stage where "strong women characters" isn't a reaction *against* something anymore, but has turned into a phrase that is itself being reacted to. And since the phrase has evolved in the past few decades, everyone who reacts to it is reacting to something slightly different and re-defined in their own mind. That's the discussion I wish we could pursue with Gwyneth at that panel. But there just wasn't enough time.

I finished Gwyneth Jones' Clarke Award winning book, *Bold as Love*, just a day before we arrived in Boston for Readercon, and was delighted to discover that she had brought some extra copies of the sequel with her. So I was able to begin *Castles Made of Sand* on the plane going home. I like these books a lot, though after that panel with Gwyneth, I couldn't help but think about one of the protagonists, a young Rock and Roll star/Revolutionary named Fiorinda. Despite the fact that other characters describe her as tough as nails, she is most certainly not a "strong woman character" according to the disreputable definition above (physically powerful, always dominating, always rescuing, etc.). Fiorinda, is however, a strong woman character in the sense that her character instigates action within the plot and is developed unstereotypically and imaginatively. But she is no feminist poster woman: at one point in *Bold as Love* Fiorinda compares her role in the Rock and Roll Reich (which basically dominates this fictional British society in a post-ecological-disaster world) to that of a concealed, protected, restrained woman in Moslem culture. She is also a warped, polyamorous version of Guinevere in this turbo-charged version of the King Arthur legend. But I'm crossing my fingers that Fiorinda will grow into a more powerful woman, or at least into someone who is comfortable with the power she does possess, as the story continues. Jones says that she plans three more novels in the series. Right now, it looks like the Rock & Roll revolution is moving toward a really interesting sort of artist-designed, ecologically sustaining utopia/Camelot. I'm sort of expecting that sexual politics in the next book in this series will experience a renaissance similar to that experienced by the women's movement in the U.S. after the war protests of the 60s. Or maybe not. Maybe Gwyneth means exactly what she means about being tired of strong women characters. We'll see.

An interesting thing that's I've noticed happening at WisCon and Readercon, is that the various formal "spin-offs" from WisCon -- the Tiptree Award, Broad Universe, and the Carl Brandon Society, are having a real impact upon WisCon and upon my activities at conventions. I spent about six hours at WisCon in Tiptree and BU meetings. I spent another five or six hours at Readercon working at the Tiptree bake sale table, helping to organize the Tiptree ceremony, and sitting

down to a fairly serious Tiptree meeting. (Broad Universe had a table at Readercon too, and has begun infiltrating Readercon programs.) For the most part these meetings involved lots of fun: getting together with good friends to foment revolution has always been among my favorite pastimes. But I feel like something fundamental has changed. I'm getting the feeling that WisCon has reached some sort of threshold of terminal velocity, that the slow success of doing a feminist convention for so many years has catalyzed new communities and institutions, and that those institutions may someday overshadow WisCon itself. I find it pretty exciting.

Work

I continue to love doing electronic design and graphics at the DNR. I still have my Mac, and though the war for one consistent computer platform is never-ending, I think it's likely that I will continue to win individual battles. I also like my boss these days. Brian Wilmot has supervised us graphic artists for the last year and a half now, and he continues to be fairly clueless about how we do the work we do, but he respects that work and has been giving us far better support among the administrators than we've had under our last couple supervisors. I actually enjoy talking with him and I think he likes me too. So that's a refreshing change.

Long-term, my job is probably in just as much jeopardy as many public sector workers. Wisconsin bailed out of its most recent financial crisis by spending ALL of the revenue from its settlement with tobacco companies, and only a tiny portion of those millions went to smoking-prevention programs. Governor McCallum says that he will "pay back" the tobacco fund. Yeah, right. Unless the economy dramatically improves next year, the state deficit is going to be massive next year and will probably require layoffs of state workers. Both Scott and I work for the state. His position at the Department of Transportation is probably safer than mine. Things could change fairly quickly if the economy tanks or long-term if government follows the lead of so many private sector businesses and cuts back on health care and pay scale. But right now, we artists are keeping really busy, and in fact are struggling with somewhat more work than we can actually do ourselves. Even though the agency puts nearly everything we publish onto its web pages, it is spending more than ever on print publications, so my job description hasn't changed much, even in these days of web supremacy. I'm providing lots of graphics and pdfs for the web, but I'm still spending 99% of my time designing publications for print. I'm doing more Photoshop work than I used to do, more photo manipulation, more high end color work, as the cost of printing color continues to fall. My favorite programs are Adobe products -- Illustrator, Photoshop, InDesign.

I continue to do the occasional freelance job. I haven't

bothered advertising my services because I don't really want to make the changes in my life that would be necessary if I started doing a lot of freelance work. Nevertheless, word-of-mouth brings me a new customer a couple times a year, and the extra income is welcome. I love working for the DNR, but I'm not going to get rich on the paycheck. Still, given the way things are these days, I'm more appreciative than ever that I have good health care coverage and a good pension plan.

In other words, I'm pretty happy with my job and haven't seriously considered looking for other work for a long time.

□ Mailing Comments, № 100

Jane Hawkins

That's an interesting phrase, "Release from Walls," and an effective one too for how it catches the image of a sudden expansion of horizons. With the pain, it's hard to focus outside of oneself; at least for any length of time, it's hard not to constantly, mentally, touch the pain. After the pain is gone, the necessity for attention to the pain disappears and suddenly it's possible to focus outwards and not be constantly distracted by internal awareness. So yes, "Release from Walls" works for me as a good description of my post-hip surgery feelings. But like someone who has spent a lot of time in jail and frequently forgets that prison bars no longer confine them, I sometimes forget (or don't believe) that the pain is really gone. I still have to take a deep breath of air and concentrate before swinging my leg up and over my bicycle. I know it won't hurt, but my body still isn't completely convinced that it isn't hiding somewhere and won't suddenly return. I wish there was a way I could get rid of that stab of fear every time I get on or off my bike.

I'm glad you've experienced the "release from Walls." It's quite a relief because you don't realize until the walls are gone, just how they restricted you. And I'm glad too that you are finding a way to accept your new body.

I wish that Phyllis had been able to be there as a mother for you when you told her about your diagnosis and around the times of your operations. No matter how much you tell yourself that she isn't capable of giving more, it's hard, if not impossible, to *want* more.

Last week my mom and I played out another one of those useless exercises that proves to both of us that we're just not the mother or daughter that the other wants. It actually kind of funny how easily I let myself get sucked into one of these charades, I guess because I really think that this time, the outcome could be different. For the most part I think I'm OK with the relationship I have with mom these days. It's friendly but we don't confide in one another. We avoid areas of conversation that we know will irritate the other. I try not to expect support or respect around my achievements with

her, and I think she tries not to bring up things about me that disappoint her. It's been a long time since she updated me on my cousins' marriages or pregnancies. But the other day she showed me an old, damaged photo of her mother's family. It was taken in 1900 or 1901, and my grandmother is the cute toddler in the forefront of the photograph with her parents and siblings around her. It is a wonderful photo, but badly damaged and faded.

"Could you do something to fix this picture? I'd like to have some copies made." Mom asked. Whew! I felt great. This is how I heard her: "I know you are very skilled at doing this kind of work. Would you help me?" I grinned and said "Sure, I'd be glad to do that for you."

I put in three or four hours fixing up that photo. By the time I was done with it, the picture looked like it had just been snapped. It retained the sepia color from the original, but the image was clear and sharp. I removed all the scratches and stains. I adjusted the levels, brightened up the image and sharpened the contrast. Everyone I showed it to expressed amazement that I'd pulled so much detail out of such a dark and dirty photo. So I was feeling pretty excited about showing it to mom. I sent her a .jpg and asked her if maybe dad would like an electronic copy for his family tree. No response. Finally I called and mom said with a pretty exasperated voice, "I told you, I just need two copies." No comment on the image.

So I sent the 20 meg file out to a photo imaging company and sent mom the two copies she asked for. I had one made for me too. She called when she received the package. "You know, the photo you did actually looks nicer than the original." She sounded a little surprised. I said I hoped it looked better, that I'd put a lot of work into it. Mom continued, "But of course I like the original better. For its sentimental value, you know." Then she asked how much it cost to have the photo made. I told her I hadn't intended to charge her. But she insisted. "It's not for me, you know. I just wanted to give copies to two of your grandmother's nieces."

So I told her what it cost: \$15 for the initial imaging, \$5 for the extra copy. She sent me a \$20 check and then a week later sent me another check for \$15. She asked me to make another three copies. I called and told her that it would be necessary to pay the initial imaging cost again. She suggested that I just send her the negative. I explained that it didn't work like that, that there was no negative, there was just a computer file. At that point she got pretty angry and told me that she'd changed her mind and that she wanted to have a copy for herself and also for her brother and sister. But that if it cost \$30 -- "Well, I don't like the photo THAT much!" So she told me not to bother having more copies made.

I misunderstood her the whole way. She had probably taken the picture to a film store and discovered that there was no easy or cheap way to have a copy made. I think she thinks that

I scanned the photo and pressed the “fix” button and then sent it away to be copied. She wasn’t really asking me for my expertise or willing to admit that I have any skills useful to her, and we both ended up unhappy about the interaction. She’d asked me, basically, to run an errand for her and I made it far more complicated than she wanted it to be. And I was looking for a sort of approval or respect from her, never a good idea.

▣ Kerry Ellis

I can easily sympathize with you about not getting respect or even basic consideration from a friend or family member. See above. And it certainly sounds like both Diane, Lorrie and Brian have some fairly serious communication problems. But it also seems like you may actually have helped to set them up in situations guaranteed to irritate to you. Why did you not finalize the Olympics opening ceremonies ticket decision earlier rather than wait till Lorri was ready to buy the tickets? You were really angry that she didn’t immediately read your email asking her to wait for your call and you made it her fault that she didn’t check her email, rather than any take the blame yourself for failing to negotiate the ticket buying during previous weeks. Why do you blame Diane for not asking you why you left the hotel room when she came out wearing too much perfume? I agree that would be obnoxious; I too really hate it when I have to deal with someone wearing way too much perfume and I don’t even have an allergy. Nevertheless, I don’t think she should be blamed for not reading your mind. She saw you leave the room and then she expressed irritation that you didn’t switch the TV off before you left. It seems that both of you have developed the habit of getting irritated with the other over problems that you expect the other to intuit. You expect Diane to know you like to listen to the news in the morning, that her perfume irritates you, that walking out of a room shows that you are angry, and that you were listening to the TV from the porch. Diane obviously expects you to read volumes into her manner too and you both ended up angry



about not being heard about feelings you haven’t expressed.

I think I also expect my mom to read my mind sometimes. With the photo incident last week, I secretly wanted the interaction to end with my mom showing appreciation of my skills. Maybe I was even fantasizing that eventually she would be able to tell me that she thinks I made good decisions in my life, that the goals I have chosen might not be her choices but are good for me. And when I didn’t get anything like that from her, I got upset. But it’s true that I didn’t tell her what a complex job was entailed in her request to fix the photo. Instead, I fantasized about how she would realize it after she saw how the photo turned out. But from mom’s point of view, all she was asking for was a small favor and it may be that she got upset when it was obvious to her that I expected her to “pay” in emotional currency. My mom and I will never have the kind of relationship I wish we could have. And maybe you and Diane will never have the kind of friendship you would like either and that Lorrie will never be the sister you want. For sure it doesn’t seem like making “quiet compromises” is a good idea; she doesn’t even know you’re compromising! And then, as you say, later public compromises end up causing you to give up far more than you want to give up.

I love the travel vignettes scattered through your zine. Don’t drop them!

Did you get your Tiptree T-shirt?

⊗ Donya Hazard White

I can’t wait to read about your Japan trip. That’s what it says in my margin notes, but actually I’ve already read about your trip in I-101. So I guess I should say I can’t wait to comment on your Japan trip report. I’m afraid though that I won’t have much time to comment on that issue this time.

I’m really glad to hear that you’re enjoying your painting class. I’ve known so many people who remember loving art as a child, but who have given up the joy of that kind of art play because they’re convinced that they don’t meet the qualifications to do so. Have fun! You may be amazed at what you produce even if that’s not your goal (maybe even *especially* if that’s not your goal!

⊗ Lyn Paleo

I am sorry to hear about your father’s death. Whatever he meant to you/means to you, the experience of dealing with the event and the physical business of it all has got to be stressful and painful. I’m glad you were able to take it out on a tire. There are worse things or people you could have taken it out on. How is Eric doing now?

The parts of Connie Willis’ *Passages* that you say you liked were interesting to me too. It’s just that there was just too many irritating characters interrupting the main character

with irritating conversations for me to feel good about having read it. It's one of Willis' favorite gimmicks; she likes to hide information in those irritating digressions that ends up being essential for the understanding of the plot. But I think it works much better in her shorter fiction; I don't tend to lose my patience then. I did lose patience in *Passages*, even though I was intrigued by the central idea and liked the technical details.

I've never had the slightest ambition to study teaching methods, Lyn, but I must say that after hearing how you describe your teaching techniques that I wish I could sit in on some of your classes. I think it would be incredibly interesting to hear you lecture.

▣ Avedon Carol

How many years has it been since we were both in *Women's Apa*? 20 years? I'm really glad that you're back in *Intercourse*; I think you dropped out around the same time I joined. I always liked reading your *AWA*zines, and since I haven't been keeping up with fanzine fandom, I've missed your voice. Your I-zine looked strange to me at first. I suddenly realized that I expected that you would use the same sans serif IBM Selectric typeface you used in your zines back then. I can see it in my mind (sort of like Avant Garde), but I can't remember its name. (Artisan?)

I appreciate the update on your life. Thank you.

How do you think Gore's handling of post-9/11 America would have been better than Bush's? My suspicion is that Gore's initiatives wouldn't have been much different than Bush's, though the language he would have used might have been different. I do think that the Israel-Palestine situation might not have escalated to the extreme it has under Gore though.

⊗ Christina Lake

It sounds as if you're getting quite a lot of personal satisfaction from work right now. I'm hoping you won't feel forced to choose between it and your relationship with Doug. Does Doug know how you're feeling about your job now, and that you wouldn't want to leave?

I can identify with your feelings about sometimes feeling out of step at conventions lately. I recently picked up Teresa Nielsen Hayden's *Making Book* and had a great time reading it; I recognized nearly all the people mentioned in it. Then, last week, I read a Plocta.com conreport and recognized practically no names at all.

A long time ago, when I was a brand new fan, Hank Luttrell told me about a famous fanzine artist that had recently stopped sending artwork to fanzines and seemed to have dropped off the fannish radar. I think the artist was Frank Frazetta, though I could be wrong. It was a long time ago and I wasn't at all familiar with his work. But Frank, or whoever it was,

had gone pro and Hank was treating his disappearance from fandom almost in the same way he might have spoken about someone who had died. I remember thinking that Hank's concerns seemed a little out of proportion to the situation, that in fact the change might be a really *good* thing for Frank. Maybe he was happier and even more productive now that he was earning a living with his artwork. Finally, I couldn't really conceive of the idea of fandom as the be-all-and-end-all of a whole lifetime. At the time I was eager to make fandom the be-all-and-end-all of *my* life, for a while anyway. I was co-editing *Janus*, which amounted to a part-time job for me at the time, I was helping to organize WisCon, and was attending as many conventions as possible. I'd made a large number of friends in the fannish community and I was having the time of my life. Still, Hank's disapproving and sad demeanor and the sense that he was trying to warn me Not to Let This Happen to Me bothered me, and I wondered if fans would ever speak sadly and disapprovingly about my disappearance from their fannish world and what I would think about *that*.

So, thinking about Corflu in Madison next year makes me a little nervous. Actually I may not even be able to attend, though we're going to try hard to arrange to be here. I'll be in England for Seacon the week before for the Tiptree Award ceremony, and we may decide to spend the week before visiting.

▣ Arthur Hlavaty

Wow, it sounds like you had a wonderful time at Mini-con! I'm sorry I didn't make it up to Minneapolis to applaud you.

▣ Debbie Notkin

I'm glad to hear that you're still feeling optimistic about working through things with Alan.

I really admire how you're attempting to find things to do with regard to the situation in the Middle East. Lately I've felt simply horror-struck, as if we are watching a catastrophe in slow motion and there's nothing anyone on the outside can do to stop it.

Your comment about how European keyboard manufacturers make a cheaper, less ergonomic keyboard for the U.S. reminded me of something I just read in Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* (which was a fascinating, fast, horrifying book). Apparently, on the days when slaughterhouses prepare meat for the EU market, the whole line slows down because European buyers require tighter standards than the U.S. market. Workers at the slaughterhouses really like EU days because of the slowdown; there are a lot fewer worker injuries on those days. That's pretty ironic considering the slogan about U.S. beef being the safest in the world. Ha.

You pointed out to Vicki that hair requiring only blow-dry-

ing is generally considered “easy to care for” by most hairdressers. Yeah, and I’ve noticed that the hairdressers that sell me my wigs seem puzzled by how little time I am willing to spend taking care of my artificial hair. I remember the same sorts of conversations with my hairdressers before alopecia took my hair. They were assuming I *wanted* to spend lots of time on my hair, and I was looking for shortcuts. Sometimes we never really communicated clearly.

I also tend to get more done during structured days than during unstructured days. What’s that old slogan, ask a busy person when you want something done? It may be true sometimes, but I’d really like to find a way to focus and get better about making better use of non-busy times, even if it is just to do the relaxing things I have been wanting to do.

□ Doug Barbour

What did you think of Robinson’s *Days of Rice and Salt*? I liked the way he used this novel to address the worry of those who engage in political activism and are never sure that they are making a difference in the world. [For those of you who haven’t read it yet-- Several characters of *Days* reincarnate over and over again within the alternate world that Robinson proposes might have happened if the Black Plague had wiped out all of Europe’s population. The mission of these characters’ spiritual journey is to fight against societal oppression, cruelty, war, starvation, and against racial, sexual, and religious hatreds. Each time, in each life, one or more of the characters takes a stand, and fights for their tiny bit of a mortal time against those enemies. Each time they die, thinking that nothing changed, that in fact things may have gotten worse.... But in fact, each battle is remembered in some way -- in books, in mythology, in songs or stories. And those battles won DO eventually make a difference for larger and larger groups of people as time goes on. The changes are imperceptible from a single mortal’s viewpoint, but they add up.] I think Robinson wanted to suggest that working toward an ideal good is *never* a waste of energy, that eventually those actions will add up and result in real changes for which no single person can claim responsibility. What a hopeful vision! Did you like it Doug? It seems to me that this book has a lot to say about the kind of social activism portrayed in his other books and illuminates the kind of utopian fiction Robinson favors.

□ Lisa Hirsch

I hope something comes of Epicentric for you and you’re able to leave your annoying current job. I certainly understand not wanting to do a huge commute to get to Google, even if it is a great job.

It’s interesting to think about whether or how *The Lord of*

the Rings would get published today, but even more interesting, I think, is how differently Tolkien might have written that epic if he were writing it today. His life wouldn’t have been the insular male-only one that originally incubated Tolkien himself and his story. Also, the influence of the classic good vs. evil World War II would be replaced by contemporary conflicts with many more levels of gray. Perhaps it would have been impossible for him to have written anything resembling this classic in any other time but Tolkien’s time.

Definitely try to see *Endurance* if you can, on dvd or video if necessary. It’s a really amazing film. Scott and I saw it at the theaters and then recently also saw the A&E production of *Shackleton*, starring Kenneth Branagh. The documentary is far more exciting and interesting. There were some good action scenes in Branagh’s version, and of course his acting was wonderful. So some of his rousing speeches were excellent and compare favorably to the talking heads of *Endurance* talking about Shackleton. But unless you had read the book or seen the documentary, you can’t really understand from the movie what an extraordinary accomplishment it was for Shackleton to bring all the men home alive. The fictionalized move doesn’t make it clear what an extraordinary navigational accomplishment it was, nor how ill-equipped the ship’s crew were for the journey across the ice shelf and an oceanic crossing in small boats.

I’d be interested to hear why you think O’Brian waited too long to kill off a major character (you mean Maturin’s wife, right?) and then did it wrong. It was pretty convenient, I thought, that when Maturin found a scientifically-minded woman who fell in love with him, Diane conveniently exited. Is that what you mean?

□ Kimberly Applecline

I’m glad to hear that you and Shannon are doing so well. (And please accept my apologies for the typing in the wrong name in the worst possibly place in my zine last time. Sorry.)

Your mom has had a really tough life, but it’s sad that she’s walled potentially positive emotional support from of her current life. And it’s sad for you too of course. I’m glad you have friends and a partner who listen and give you some of the emotional support you crave from your mother.

□ Karen E. Summerly

What a great image “chickadee days” provides. I love it. And the David Allen book sounds interesting. Certainly I like the title a lot. “Getting things done,” is one of my favorite phrases, with emphasis on DONE. I like finishing things. And I want to look for those Robert Greenberg lecture tapes (*How to Listen to and Understand Opera*) too. Thanks for the good reading/listening suggestions.

What a melancholy yet fascinating thing to do -- going through your grandmother's things and trying to imagine what meaning various belongings had to her.

▣ Elizabeth Fox

I'm sorry to hear that you're still worried and stressed about Pat's job search. I hope he finds something soon.

I think that travel is a good way to clear the mind and see things in new and different ways especially if it's a *long* trip and one is forced to leave behind habitual patterns. Maybe a trip, sojourn or as part of a group, would help you identify what's missing in your life.

▣ D. Potter

Yeah, I remember reading Dave Berry's Olympic commentary aloud to Scott one Sunday morning and we both laughed hysterically at his take on the events.

I missed seeing you all at Potlatch! And now it looks like we may not be able to attend next year's Potlatch either, sob.... (because of our planned Spring trip to England for Seacon and the Tiptree ceremony). Nevertheless Potlatch remains one of my favorite cons.

▣ Janet Jafier

Glad the toe surgery turned out alright and especially that the post-surgery pain was less uncomfortable than the original toe pain. It's great when the relief is immediately apparent after a medical procedure; it's so reassuring. My dad has been having operations on his spine this year, and he's never sure there's actually been an improvement. His doctors tell him to wait, that he'll feel better slowly and will gradually see an improvement in his range of motion, but then he says he forgets, really, what he used to feel like and he's not sure if there's been much of an effect.

Whoops, I use the phrase "honing in." I always thought it was related to a kind of wood-carving or maybe ivory-carving, in which the tool gradually hones into the final shape. No?

I can see how the image suggested by the phrase "tubes tied" connotes a temporary contraceptive method. I've always used "tubal ligation," which sounds satisfyingly final to me.

The realization that boxers were damaging their brains resulted in some reforms in that sport. Maybe something similar will happen in the figure skating world when enough skaters end up in wheelchairs at an early age. I agree with you that it's awful the way so many professional athletes seem willing to sacrifice their future health for short-term victories and salaries.

Congratulations to Matt on those great job offers! And congratulations to you for getting access to Apple discounts!

Which Mac are you getting?

Anything that makes a long commute valuable in itself is a good thing. You aren't spending so much time being anxious about how much time it is taking to get to work, and aren't taking out your anxiety on other travelers. A good attitude.

What a dilemma you have with Kenny! I hope that when your mom confronts him, that it will have a good effect on him. But it sounds like that isn't too likely; Kenny doesn't sound like the kind of person who will admit that his behavior is a problem and agree readily to change it. Every family has one or two people like this, don't they? People tend to want to avoid them, but the whole family loves and admires the irritating person's partner, or cares for the irritating person's children I don't think there is an easy way to deal with the problem. You focus on the person you love and admire, and make sure you're polite and pleasant to the partner. And grit your teeth. I'll be interested to hear if you and your family come up with a way to keep getting together comfortably.

I think I liked *Towing Jehovah* because my memories of Catholic education contained so much emphasis on doctrine that Christ's teachings were literally true. Wine transmogrified in mass is *literally* not figuratively turned into the blood of Christ. Mary was literally a virgin when she gave birth to Christ. So I was delighted to see some of that Catholic doctrine carried to a ridiculously logical extreme. I especially liked the search for Christ's bellybutton.

I haven't read *Servants of the Map*, but I've picked it up several times in the bookstore because I love the title so much. Then I read the dust jacket description and it doesn't match the fantastic image conjured in my mind by its title, so I put it down again. (In my mind, servants of the map should be engaged in a timeless, worldwide struggle to make sure that the territory matches the map. They would be the ultimate reactionaries. Sometimes that science fictional thinking just gets in the way!)

My first reaction to the Dogma movement's tenants is that I wouldn't be especially interested in seeing many movies made according to its creed. I'm not much interested in ultra-realistic paintings either, which are hard to tell apart from photographs. I like some artifice in art.

The ultimate sticky romance of they type you rent when Matt goes out of town is *It Could Happen to You*, about a cop who wins the lottery with a ticket that he promised to share with a waitress (staring Bridget Fonda and Nicolas Cage). The cop's broken marriage, his love affair with the waitress, the wife's lawsuit against her husband and his lover, and the ultimate happy ending all happen on the front pages of a New York City tabloid newspaper. In fact the happy ending only happens *because* everyone in NYC is able to keep track of the melodrama. I also hate the idea of making private life so public, nevertheless I sort of liked this movie.

▣ Comments on № 101

won't be able to finish comments on #101 this time, but here's a good running start...

▣ Christina Lake

It's hard to break the habit of lying about little things to one's parents. I know. I remember lying to my mom when I returned from shopping for clothes when I was in high school. My mother is a Depression child and she gets pretty steamed when things cost more than she thinks they should. By the time I was 16 and working part-time, mom expected me to buy my own clothes, but she also wanted to control what I bought. So I found it easier to pretend I'd spent much less for my clothes than I actually did. Even when I halved the price she would still get angry sometimes and demand that I return the clothing. Well, that was a long time ago, and she doesn't ask me what I pay for things anymore, thank heaven. (Though around the holidays she has sometimes asked for ordinary household items, most recently bed sheets, for which she can't bring herself to pay premium prices. It's pretty funny. "Don't tell me how much these cost. I love them!" I enjoyed that.) Nevertheless, I sometimes find myself omitting information, or outright lying to her for no good reason, just because I've learned the habit of avoiding blow-ups. I nearly always neglect to tell her where I travel because my family seems to have branches in most U.S. cities and I hate having to deal with the inevitable demand: "Make sure you call your aunt and uncle when you get into town. They'll want to have you over for dinner." I used to tell her about my trips and would firmly explain that there wouldn't be time for a family visit, but then she started telling my aunts and uncles about what an evil niece I was because I hadn't called them. So now I don't tell her anymore.

I enjoyed your family trip report and admire you greatly for doing the trip with your folks. I've tended to avoid vacations with my folks, but I suspect I might wish I hadn't someday.

I want training cds that can be entered like a reference book. When I want to learn a technique, I'd like to be able to zoom directly to that training segment and run it, without having to go through a whole bunch of introductory stuff. I'd like training cds to have menus like dvd movies. Maybe most of them already do, but I gave up on some of the early ones that seemed to require that I do the whole training course at once.

Growing up Catholic in the U.S. led me also to expect that non-Catholics (what a bizarre phrase, isn't it?!) to be rather dangerous sorts of people. And when I found out that non-Catholics thought that we were the dangerous ones, storing guns in our basements, etc., I was sadly disillusioned. One more bad guy/good guy scenario made muddy and

ambiguous in real life.

▣ Michael Sturza

Hope that you've escaped from the shallow trough of despondency and are having a bit of fun. Opening your horizons and finding time for more activities as you are doing sounds like a good thing, and fun in its own right as well as for possible side benefits.

I was glad to see you at WisCon!

Scott and I just watched the dvd of *Memento*; it's the second time watching that movie for us both. It was interesting to see the rhythm change. At the beginning of the film, the segments of time have considerable overlap; by the end their initial images overlap, but that's all. The editing allows us to get used to the format. But I also found the film a lot less ambiguous the second time.

Y Tu Mama Tambien and *Time Out* sounds great; I'm going to look for them both. And *Gosford Park* was wonderful, I agree. I pretty much agree with what you say about *A Beautiful Mind*. Did you find the previews somewhat misleading? I saw the film within a week of its opening, but until then, the previews suggested to me that this movie was a real spy thriller, not a story about delusions of spies. I suspect that Hollywood tried to hedge their bets before the film opened, hoping to attract lots of people in the initial weekend who wanted an action flick.

▣ Vicki Rosenzweig

I'm sorry to hear that you are still looking for a good job, with benefits, etc., and hope that you find one soon! Good luck on the lead from Bruce Schneier. I assume this would be a short-term freelance job, but a good thing in any case, and it looks like fun too.

I wish I knew what happened to that woman who found WisCon at the Room of One's Own reception. She sounded like someone newly converted to a new religion. But I didn't see her around at WisCon. Haven't I said this to you already? Maybe I did. I bet your published your (excellent) WisCon report in the Madison apa too.

▣ Ian Hagemann

Sorry to hear that they're treating you so stupidly at your job. What a waste of resources not to take advantage of the things you do well and instead expect/trap you to fail at something else. Nobody wins. But the Despair.com posters sound great. I'll have to look up that web site.

Thanks for starting to write up your Cube trip. Did you see the Diego Rivera mural that he re-painted in Mexico

after it had been destroyed in New York City? (I'm thinking of the incident in the film, *The Cradle Will Rock*.) Did you get sick from drinking the water? My sister got sick just from eating fruit that had been washed in tap water when we were in Guanajuato a couple years ago.

Congratulations on writing the novel in a month. Do you like working at that speed?

And good for you for writing that letter to the DOT!

□ Lisa Hirsch

Your boss must be in a constant state of panic, not knowing anything about how things work, but always having to come up with authoritative pronouncements and orders. If only you could convince him that he could trust you, and that your suggestions aren't meant to undermine him but that you're all shooting for the same goal. What a painful situation!

I'm glad to hear that Donna's studies are going so well and that you both are feeling accomplished and happy about your house organizing project. I like the feeling of a clean/organized space too. It makes me want to spend more time in that place. At the moment this is not a good situation because the most beautiful, clean and organized place in our house is our newly renovated bathroom. And I don't need another shower at the moment.

I loved reading how you are training Molly. I don't know why I'm so interested in dog training stuff; I like dogs but we don't own one and it isn't likely in the near future. But I love to listen to the Patricia McConnell radio show on NPR. She's an animal behaviorist and adjunct professor of zoology at the University of Wisconsin Madison; in fact I think she's just recently had a book published on dog training. You might be

interested. Its title is *The Other End of the Leash*.

Congratulations on finishing *War and Peace*. I tried it once a very long time ago, but got hopelessly mixed up because I did my usual thing of skimming longish complex names and assuming that I'd recognize its next appearance as "that longish complex name." Not a good idea for *W&P*. But I never did go back and give it another try. I seem to be interested in trying classics these days. The Jane Austen group I belong to has finished Austen's novels and we're now starting to diversify. Maybe *W&P* is on the horizon.

Yes, you're correct. There are two separate text files and they flow into two different columns (outside and inside) each with different widths. The outside column is more narrow than the inside column. In addition, each column type (the outside one for the book reviews and the inside one for comments) uses a different style definition -- different typeface and different type size. If it works the way I wanted it to work, when you turn the page, your eye tends to look for text that looks like the text you were reading on the previous page. Layout geek? Whose a layout geek?

If you feel you need to read Emshwiller's *Carmon Dog*, then you really, really need to read her newer novel, *The Mount*. I finished it right after *WisCon* and it has replaced all other Emshwiller books as my favorite. Well maybe it hasn't replaced *Ledoyt*.

You write such great mailing comments! Thank you.

☒ ☑ ☒

I got through much less of *Intercourse* 101 than I thought I would. I will continue next time. See you all in October, deer hunting season.

--Jeanne

