

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

G R A Y S C A L E



This is Grayscale #28, a zine for
Intercourse, and an Obsessive
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CWD Update

It has been discovered that three men died in the late 1990s of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. The three men have in common the fact that they hunted deer and elk together and also that they got together regularly for feasts of deer and elk meat. It's beginning to look like there's some good evidence for determining that it's possible for Chronic Wasting Disease to pass from deer to humans. This is really bad news.

Another piece of bad news comes from three deer/elk farms outside the hot zone. Several farm deer have tested positive to CWD. No word yet about where the deer initially came from.

And finally, the last piece of bad news is that registration for deer-hunting in Wisconsin has fallen as much as 30% below last year's reg figures.

Scott's and my vacation officially began on Saturday morning, August 31, as we drove northeast across Wisconsin to Manitowoc. We were still blitzed from staying up late packing the previous night. I read a couple newspapers aloud to Scott as he drove and sipped on his coffee. But it really felt like our vacation began as we boarded the *S.S. Badger* at 12:30 P.M. The *S.S. Badger* cruises between Manitowoc Wisconsin and Ludington Michigan; it's a huge, coal-burning car ferry capable of carrying 620 passengers and 180 vehicles. Built in 1952, I suspect that some sort of grandfather clause may have allowed its owners to avoid compliance with an environmental rule or two. Black, smelly smoke billowed from its stack and some sort of greasy, chunky *stuff* flowed out of the bilge pipes into Lake Michigan as we traveled. But if you avoided staring with horror at those pipes and gazed forward, it was possible to pretend the smoke and bilge didn't exist and you could enjoy the lake, with no land in sight, for most of the 5-hour trip. The weather was crystal clear and warm, the waves were small, and we managed to snag two reclining deck chairs on a shaded part of the deck.



Taking the ferry across Lake Michigan has been something we'd been wanting to do for years. A couple years ago we tried, but called too late to get a reservation; this time we reserved on-line a month in advance. But I don't think I would recommend the trip to anyone as a *cruise*. It may well be worth the price to avoid diving through Chicago (\$49 for the car; plus \$42 per adult), but you shouldn't go expecting any sort of *Carnival*-like experience. The cafeteria is depressing, a sort of grim and grimy place. Folks sat around in plastic chairs and rickety tables playing cards; kids cried. I'm glad the weather allowed us to stay outside. I meant to get started on one of my vacation books (George R. R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones*), but instead dozed comfortably upon my reclining chair.

After the ferry docked, we watched from the upper deck as ferry employees drove cars out from the lowest deck, parked them in the harbor lot, and then sprinted back to get another car. Meanwhile passengers claimed their cars and drove off, leaving parking spaces for more vehicles. The first to roll off the ferry were three huge semi trailers; next came dozens of RVs and SUVs. Scott and I began to suspect that we were the only passengers who did not own a truck, but then the smaller vehicles began to emerge. We figure the ceilings in the ferry must get progressively lower further into the ferry. Finally we reclaimed our car and drove out of Ludington's harbor; it was about 6:30 P.M. Ludington seems like a fairly prosperous tourist town, certainly much more lively than Manitowoc, but we didn't dawdle. Our plan was to

drive directly north a few miles to Ludington State Park where we hoped to set up our tent and eat the roasted chicken I'd baked the night before.

As we drove through town, I turned to Scott and grinned. "That concludes the *planned* portion of our trip!" Scott looked slightly alarmed, but then remembered that we'd decided not to make reservations ahead of time (except for the ferry). A couple years ago when we did a similar sort of driving-camping trip along Lake Superior's North Shore, we'd had no trouble getting campsites. And it had been fun to spontaneously move on when we wanted and stay at the most beautiful parks, and also have the option to check into a hotel to get out of the rain or take advantage of a hot shower. (Later we remembered that we did in fact make reservations for the first night of our North Shore vacation. It was Labor Day weekend, after all. It's too bad we didn't remember that before we left for our Michigan vacation which also began on Labor Day weekend....) To save you any suspense, let me say that one should *always* make reservations for Labor Day weekend Saturdays if you plan to sleep anywhere other than your car. We might have been able to snag one of the first-come-first-serve campsites at Ludington State Park — if we'd arrived before 8:00 A.M. when these sites are offered, but asking the park ranger if they had sites available at 7 P.M. on a holiday just made them look at us like we were a total wackos. Let me assure you.

We drove past a couple of KOA campgrounds that were packed to the gills and quickly decided that we were unlikely to find any open campsites anywhere in the state, certainly not in time to pitch our tent before sunset. We also noticed that hotel after hotel sign flashed "no vacancy," or "sorry." So, Scott pulled over to the side of the road and I pulled out our cell phone and a Super-8 hotel directory. We don't often use our cell phone. In fact we sometimes fail to use it at all from month to month, but boy was I glad to have it a couple times on this vacation. A call to Super-8's 800 number turned up one available room within reasonable driving distance, about 60 miles west of us, in Cadillac. I didn't hesitate; "we'll take it," I said. The drive through the deep forests of the Manistee National Forest to Cadillac was actually quite beautiful, and Cadillac turned out to be a very pretty little town whose buildings clustered around two lakes. By the time we arrived at our hotel, it was dark and all we wanted was eat some supper. Oh, and *one* of us wanted to run out quick for a six-pack of beers. As

we checked in, I heard the clerk turn away two very tired folks who had obviously been driving from hotel to hotel looking for someplace to sleep. "Sorry, no rooms left," he told them. That could easily have been us, I thought. I think we were very lucky.

The next morning we made use of our cell phone again, this time to find out if there were any nearby Lake Michigan shore campsites available on Sunday night. We were relieved to discover that Michigan State Parks hold out a percentage of all their campsites from the reservation system on a first-come-first-serve basis. If we arrived early in the morning, there might be a site still available at Orchard Beach State Park, which is located just 35 north of Ludington State Park, and due west of Cadillac. We quickly packed the car up and drove west back to Lake Michigan's shore. Success! There were still three sites left. We paid for a park sticker, chose a campsite, but then decided not to spend the day at Orchard Beach. Our brief glimpse of Ludington the evening before had been tantalizingly beautiful, so we went back south to check it out. We found a delicious lunch in a Ludington brew pub, hiked at the state park, and returned to Orchard Beach in time to set up camp before it got dark.

The main reason we wanted to spend some time on the Michigan side of Lake Michigan is because it's supposed to be so very different from the Wisconsin side. I've camped at most of the state parks on the Wisconsin side dozens of times. In fact one of my favorite places in the world is Wisconsin's Rock Island State Park, which sits out in the middle of the lake, off the tip of Door County Peninsula. Unfortunately, the water on the Wisconsin side of the lake isn't very warm, which Scott points out whenever I talk about swimming in Lake Michigan. The reason the water rarely gets very warm on the west side of the lake — even by late summer — is that the prevailing westerly winds tend to blow warmer surface waters east, and suck the colder deeper water up to the shore. The opposite is true in Michigan. Also, many people have told me about the gorgeous beaches and dunes that line the whole eastern coast of Lake Michigan. That's what we came to see and we were not disappointed.

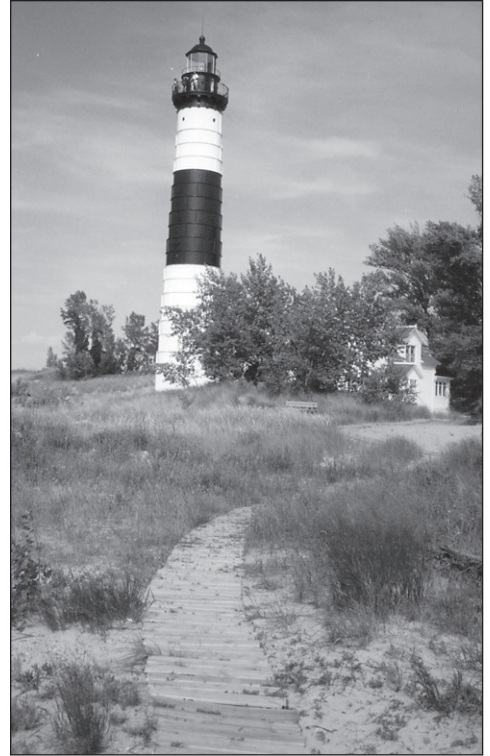
The beach seems to go forever. No matter how high you climb, you can't see the end of the lovely, wide, white sand beaches. If you stand at the edge of the beach, just where the largest waves reach, you will sink ankle deep into the sand within seconds. The gulls swoop, the sun shines, the waves roll in, and the color of the water is

turquoise near the shore and steel blue further out in the deeper water. It looks like the Caribbean without sharks. (Flies, however, more than make up in the annoyance department when they're present.)

It was late Sunday morning, the day before Labor Day, when we rolled into Ludington State Park, and we were suddenly confronted by a traffic jam of cars, trailers, RV's and SUVs. Damn. *But of course...* it was Labor Day Weekend. We had to get in line and wait for a parking space. But we quickly moved to the front of the line; within 5 minutes we pulled into a space. We glanced at the dozens of people floating and laughing as they rode the current of Sable River between Hamlin Lake and Lake Michigan. They were obviously having a great time, but it looked too crowded to us. And we decided not even to try the crowded beach just off the parking lot. Instead, after a glance at the map, we strolled through the campgrounds and hiked the path parallel to the beach, behind the first row of dunes, to the lighthouse -- about 2 miles north. The path was solid packed sand and mostly deserted. The views of the lighthouse peaking over the dunes were beautiful. We were delighted to find, when we reached the lighthouse, that few folks bothered to hike north of the main park area. It didn't feel like major holiday bedlam anymore.

The beach near the lighthouse was deserted, and only a handful of people explored the lighthouse itself. We climbed the several hundred steps up to the top of the lighthouse and took pictures. Ooooo! Ahhhh!. That's when we realized how extensive the dune system really was. I had already been impressed by the width of the beaches — one city block wide at least — but I hadn't realized that the partially grassed dunes beyond them extended for miles inland from the lake. In fact, I'd been naively assuming that the huge amount of sand on the eastern shores of the lake would turn out to be carried by the same westerly wind system that regulates water temperature; perhaps Michigan sand was stolen Wisconsin sand.... Nope. Do not pass Go. Do not collect \$200. The lighthouse guide explained that most of northwestern Michigan was covered by a very deep layer of sand and gravel during the last glacial advance. In fact most of this portion of the lower peninsula was an enormous terminal moraine (deposits left behind at the edge of a shrinking glacier). As water and wind erodes the shoreline, the sand gets blown eastward and forms parallel dunes, like dry, stationary waves rising and falling for miles east of the lake's shore. I suppose the sand isn't very good for gardening, but it sure is gorgeous. Who'd have thought such a beautiful, alien place existed just on the other side of Lake Michigan?

The lighthouse museum displayed lots of information about shipwrecks, a theme that repeated itself as we traveled north that week. Lots of ships carrying wood down to Chicago in the late 1800s (wood that built the city twice — once before and once after the great Chicago fire) foundered on transient, submerged sand bars along this shoreline. It looks like the first community building project undertaken by most seaside towns was their lighthouse — even before the church. But we didn't spend much time in the museum; we wanted to make sure to get



Lighthouse at Ludington State Park



View of beach north of Ludington



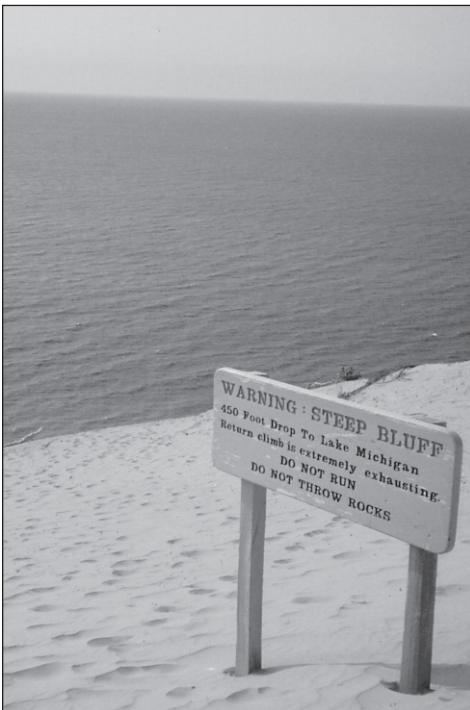
View from lighthouse of the extensive dune system (left) and Lake Michigan (right).



500-foot sand dune



Exhausted climbers reaching the lip of the dune



Warning! You Could Die!

back up to Orchard Beach before dark to set up camp.

We also wanted to walk back to our car via the very empty beach, so we bought a couple of bottles of water, waded in the surf for a little while, and then headed back south. The walk back was cooler going south, because we were able to enjoy the lake breezes that the dunes had blocked on our way north to the lighthouse. But the walking was a little harder. Most of the back beach was fairly hard-packed, but some of it wasn't and we were pretty tired of slogging through soft, deep sand by the time we got back to our car.

We've got an easy 2-person tent to set up. (Whoever invented shock-corded poles was a genius.) Within a half-hour our pads, sleeping bags and gear were stowed in the tent. We finished off the rest of the baked chicken along with some watermelon for dinner, and walked up the hill to watch the sun set over the lake. Orchard Beach's shore is accessible via a long set of wooden stairs that scale the cliff west of the campground. The waves crashed onto the shore as the sun sank brilliantly under the waves to the west. Sounds sort of idyllic doesn't it? Well it was, and romantic too. But... That night I learned to appreciate the Wisconsin State Park system. Wisconsin campground sites tend to be widely spaced, with trees between each site. Especially at some of the parks with fewer amenities (i.e., pit toilets only), you can camp for days without seeing anyone. Michigan's park system operates under a very different philosophy. They pack as many campsites into the minimum amount of space possible. They don't provide separate campgrounds for RVs and tent campers. They assume everyone needs electrical outlets. Individual campsites are just big enough for an RV, a car and a picnic table and most people have RVs AND trucks; it's extremely crowded, well-lit, and wouldn't remind anyone of a wilderness. In spite of that, I was surprised how considerate people were. It didn't get noisy at all and we slept well. Nevertheless, we decided before drifting off to sleep that we would head north the next morning, skipping two state parks along the way, and make camp next at Sleeping Dunes National Seashore. Federal Park campgrounds tend to be much less crowded.

We were surprised to wake up the next morning to high winds and soon afterwards, to falling rain. We suddenly realized that we hadn't checked any weather reports since leaving Wisconsin. Heavy, gray clouds filled the sky, and it felt like the kind of rain that might go on for hours, maybe even all day. So when the wind let up a bit, we donned our rain gear and began to break camp. Inside the tent, I stuffed the sleeping bags, rolled up the pads, and packed clothing into a bag while Scott transferred stuff into the car. The tent got a little wet as we collapsed it in the rain, but not too badly. We drove over to the bathhouse and took showers before leaving the park. By the time we were finished, it had stopped raining and the sun was emerging from the clouds; we should have slept in and waited out the rain. *sigh* Oh well, we'd gotten an earlier start than we had expected, but that was all right. We decided that we weren't all that impressed by Orchard Beach anyway, and it was time to roll northwards to Sleeping Dunes National Seashore.

An hour later, our car slowly crunched over the narrow gravel roads into Glen Haven campground at Sleeping Dunes National Seashore. It was lovely, everything a good campground should be. This one was devoted mainly to campers; the sites were widely spaced and there were lots of trees. There was only one problem. The blackboard next to the park office warned: “Violent storm tonight. Possibly *dangerously* high winds.” Not the sort of thing you want to see if you’re planning on sleeping in a little two-person tent with your tent staked into sand. So we decided to spend the rest of the day (before the storm began) exploring the park, find a nearby hotel and spend the night in a building, and then camp at Sleeping Bear on Tuesday night. We found a nice little hotel (Maple Lane Resort) just outside the park with no trouble. The owner even let us hang our tent on their clothesline to dry it out. Then we hurried back to the Sleeping Bear.

Sleeping Bear Dunes National Seashore is probably the most famous part of the Lower Peninsula’s entire seashore, and rightly so. Set in a hilly region fringed with massive coastal sand dunes and dotted with clear lakes, there are breathtaking vistas every direction you look. Towering sand dunes, secluded islands, Maple-Beach forests (which must be gorgeous in the fall), and ghost forests! Ghost forests occur when migrating dunes bury trees and later, when the dunes move on, they are exposed again —white, stark and a little spooky looking. We got our first look at the park by driving the one-lane 7.5-mile Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive. We picked up a printed tour guide from park headquarters and were reminded to make sure we got out of the car and hiked out to sites #9 and 10. One of the first stops was a lookout over Glen Lake, where we learned that the erosion process along Michigan’s coastline involved not only the wearing-away of land, but also the sealing in of bays. Michigan’s shore is dotted with hundreds of shallow lakes, separated by narrow isthmuses. They were created by sand bars that grew to permanence, cutting off the bays and making them into separate lakes. Looking at Glen Lake from the overlook, made it quite clear what had happened. In fact we could see our own Glen Lake campground right in the middle of the isthmus separating Lake Michigan from the smaller lake.

But the most beautiful stops by far were to be found at overlooks #9 and 10. We parked the car and walked up the dunes on top of wooden boardwalk and finally got up to the top of an extremely windy, and very tall dune.

In fact, this one towers 500 feet over Lake Michigan’s surface. We approached it via the gentle eastern slope. The steep side of the bluff plunges down to the shore from the vista on which we stood. Several signs warn that its steep grade is very dangerous, that the return climb is extremely strenuous and should be undertaken only by those in the best physical condition. Scott and I decided not to try it. Some people have told me that the climb down is really fun, that you sort of “slush” down the slope and that it feels like skiing without skis. But they also say the return climb is a killer. Signs warn that a minimum of 1.5 hours should be allotted for the climb back up. People said that if you can’t make it back up, that boats can be sent to rescue you, but that the rescue costs \$250. From an overlook platform, we watched several folks trudge back up the slope. They looked like ants on the shoreline. Some were writing notes in gigantic letters on the beach to those of us up on the top of the dune, but it was too far away to make out what they wrote. (Maybe “Help! Please send a boat!”) The two or three people climbing the slope moved very slowly and stopped a lot, though it looked like it was risky to stop, because they had the tendency to slowly sink backwards if they stayed still too long. I took pictures from the top, but none of my pictures really convey the pitch of the slope, the distance ... or the breathtaking beauty of the scene. As we stood there looking and hanging onto our hats against the high wind, we could see the storm approaching from the west, miles and miles away. Veils of slanting gray mist crossed the sky between clouds and sea.

We got back to our hotel ahead of the storm and were able to roll up our tent and stuff it into its bag before the rain began to fall. But, as it turned out, the storm was a bit of an anticlimax. It sprinkled gently for a half-hour or so, and then the sun came out again. Since our hotel was located on the shore of Glen Lake, Scott and I strolled down to the beach and watched the sunset over its calm surface. Then we drove into town for a yummy dinner of whitefish with crab salsa. What happened to the dangerous storm? the violent winds? Days later we heard that a violent storm had passed just south of us. We could easily have camped that night as it turned out.

First thing the next morning, we were able to snag a prime, shore-side camp site. We quickly set up our tent, laid out pads and sleeping bags in the tent, and secured the rest of our gear. I changed into my swimming suit; Scott changed into shorts. We carried blankets, towels, books and water bottles out to the beach, prepared for



It's really, really steep!



Rain coming



Campsite at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Seashore, and the scene of the crime



Castle Mall

a relaxing few hours on the beach. The holiday weekend was over; it was Tuesday and the campground had almost entirely emptied. The park ranger said that they had had no vacancies since early June this year; we definitely arrived at the right time of year! We had the huge beach almost to ourselves. There were a couple people playing in the surf about a half mile away. Scott says he forgot his suit, but had to admit that even he did not think the water was cold. I think he may have regretted not having a suit along. My swim was quite delightful, though the process of getting into the water was pretty amusing. Our beach had a fair amount of stones mixed in with the sand, and the lip of the beach resembled a rocky stair step of about 12 inches down into the water. The sharp-edged stones required that you move carefully on bare feet; the forceful waves kept you off-balance. In fact the first thing that happened after I'd stepped down into the lake was that a sudden wave caught me and pushed me over into the water. It's a great way to get wet quickly, but highly undignified. I swam for a while in the crystal clear water, enjoying every moment of it. There were some fairly serious currents operating near the shore so I didn't go way out. And when I returned, treading carefully on the rocky sand near shore, a wave took me again — this time knocking me over and then lifting me up and over the "step" and delivering me onto sand at Scott's feet. It was so funny, all I could do was lay there for a few moments laughing.

We applied plenty of sun screen and it wasn't too warm, so we were able to spend several hours talking and reading on the beach. The flies were a little obnoxious then, and later in the evening at camp, but it was close to a perfect day. The sky was perfectly clear, perfectly blue. The water ranged in colors from Caribbean turquoise blue close to shore, to steel-blue far out in the very deep water, both contrasting nicely with the white sand and surf. Graceful dune grass moved in the wind in liquid waves. Gulls flew overhead and there were oatmeal-chocolate chip-coconut-pecan cookies to nibble.

One of our vacation traditions is that whenever we go camping, I make a special batch of oatmeal-chocolate chip-coconut-pecan cookies for us as a traveling treat. This time, we kept the cookies in a Tupperware container and kept the container in a soft-sided, zippered cooler. We had some cookies for dessert Tuesday night. Unfortunately, that was the last taste either of us would have of them. Scott left the tent before me on Wednesday morning and I woke to the sound of his anguished cry: "They ate them ALL. They're ALL GONE!" It turns out that a clever squirrel had pushed the zipper open with its nose, crawled into the cooler, somehow managed to remove the Tupperware top, and had eaten or carried away every cookie and every cookie crumb. Scott suggested that yellow crime scene tape might be in order. Both of us began glancing around for sugar-crazed, fat rodents. This was the only tragedy of our trip. Scott never really saw the humor of the episode, but I made him another batch of camping cookies when we got home.

We'd dismantled camp by 9 A.M. and began driving north to our next destination — Wilderness State Park — which is located on a

bony finger of a peninsula that points west into Lake Michigan, just west of Mackinaw Bridge. It's an enormous park, more than 8,000 acres, and most of it really is wilderness. On Monday I had noticed a description of that park in one of our guides and was intrigued by its mention of "Rustic Cabins" available for rent. I called and it turned out that, yes, one of the cabins was available on Wednesday night so we reserved it.

The drive north to Wilderness State Park took most of the day since we chose smaller, scenic routes along the lake. We looked for cherries to buy, but it turned out that a late freeze this spring destroyed most of Michigan's cherry crop, so we brought home no gallons of pitted cherries as I had hoped to do.

One of the things that surprised us was that the further north we traveled, the more wealth we saw. In Wisconsin it seems that the further north you go, the more rustic things get. But in Michigan, the shops get more trendy and more expensive looking the further north you go. There are a lot of extremely rich people in Michigan whose vacation houses are more lavish than any house ever built in Madison. Around Petosky (which is famous for being close to Earnest Hemingway's childhood home in the Big Northwoods), we began seeing gated communities. Of course the gates weren't meant to keep out local riff-raff so much as they were to keep out us tourists.... As we drove along Highway 31 just south of Petosky, we pulled over to the side of the road when we noticed what looked like a castle built below and on the other side of a ridge, right along the lakeshore. The castle turned out to be a collection of 3- and 4- story buildings, and the architecture of each building was different and unique ... but most remarkably—fanciful. It was as if we'd driven into a different dimension and everything was going to be different from now on.... We had to take a closer look. We turned around and took the turnoff down toward the lake and the castle and as we got closer, it became clear that we were entering a newly-built gated community. Gigantic, mansions, hidden from the road were connected by an artfully designed system of canals, so each owner would be able to tie up their boat(s) right next to their homes. Some of the homes were built into the side of and below a cliff that paralleled Highway 31. The "castle" turned out to be an extremely high class shopping mall. We drove down the cobblestone road through the center of the shops; it felt like a gentrified medieval village to me, if you can imagine that. There were a couple people strolling on

the sidewalks window shopping, but mostly the whole place was deserted. The nearby homes were still under construction after all, no had moved in yet. Nevertheless, here were these very big, very expensive, glitzy shops, open and ready for business. I imagine it must have been very expensive to build and open the shops before any prospective customers lived nearby. And yet there they were, open to encourage people to buy houses, I imagine. It was a little spooky. Next time we come this way, I doubt that we will be allowed through the gates.

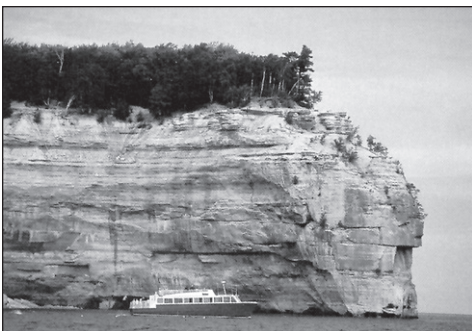
North of Petosky, the highway turned into a twisting, extremely narrow (but exquisitely cared for) asphalt road. There is just barely room for two cars side-by-side, although rear view mirrors might have to be sacrificed. Driving off the road to make room for oncoming traffic is risky too, since there is no gravel shoulder, and trees grow inches from the edge of the asphalt. I suppose that's why the speed limit was 20 mph for all 23 miles. Why is the road so narrow, but obviously so well taken care of? Scott and I think the road used to be a gravel road, and fairly recently too. Wealth has taken over the area in a big way (imagine three-story log "cabins" with cathedral windows, 8 or 9 chimneys, glassed-in pools and saunas, tennis courts and tree-mounted cameras.) But the new owners don't want to encourage tourists to continue driving through their neighborhoods. There are lots of wider east-west roads off this road, so the locals can get in and out fairly easily, but the lakeshore route is made as discouraging as possible to people attempting to drive north along the lake. It seems to be working. We encountered only one car along the way.

Anyway, it was later than we expected when we finally arrived at the southern part of Wilderness State Park. It took us more than an hour to discover that the park was huge and that there were no roads directly north into the main part of the park and that we would have to drive east several miles, then north, and then west again in order to get to the park headquarters. By the time we finally located the park office, it was past 6 P.M., the staff had locked up and gone home, and we didn't know what to do about our "rustic cabin" reservation. Everything turned out fine, though. One of the rangers had put our key and a map in an envelope with my name on it, and clipped it to a message board outside the office. Ahhh! In a few moments we'd find our cabin, get settled in and then go out to find some supper. Well it wasn't quite that easy.

Our cabin turned out to be at the end of about



Rustic cabin at Wilderness State Park



Views of Painted Rocks National Seashore

4 miles of narrow gravel road. We drove almost all the way out to the end of the bony peninsula that juts out into Lake Michigan, mumbling thanks all the way that it hadn't rained recently. If the roads had been muddy, we would never have made it without four-wheel drive. About an hour later we finally jolted, bumped and ground our way to the door of our cabin, which was a lovely sight. We had our own outhouse close at hand, and inside there was a wood-burning stove, bunk beds (no bedding, but we had our sleeping bags), wooden tables and benches, a comfy chair of wood and leather, and big windows looking west out at the marsh between the cabin and the lake. It really was beautiful. I think bird watchers would think they'd died and gone to heaven. We couldn't believe our luck that we'd been able to reserve it. But after we'd hauled in our gear it was 7:30 P.M. and we no longer felt like a long drive (probably all the way into Mackinaw City) to get food. And we really didn't relish the idea of a nighttime drive back through the forests and gravel roads to our cabin. So we took a shorter drive to the camp store a couple miles down the gravel road and discovered that the proprietor had mostly run out of food. He explained that the season was practically over and it just didn't seem worthwhile. We bought a couple sticks of beef jerky and microwaved two frozen sandwiches but couldn't finish eating either of them because they were so awful. Supper that night was beef jerky and some cheese and crackers from our cooler. But it didn't matter. We heard loons cry out to one another and when it got dark, it got utterly and completely dark. There was no moon at all and the sky was full of stars. And then it got completely and utterly quiet. Scott claimed that it was too quiet to sleep, but I had no trouble falling asleep at all. The next morning we looked at the map again and noticed that the cross-country ski trail starts right outside the cabin. Our cabin must be a popular one among winter skiers.

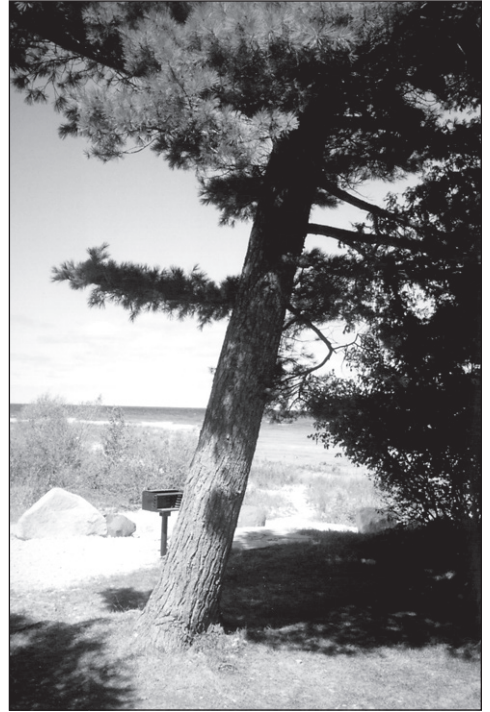
Thursday morning we loaded up the car again and headed east to Mackinaw City, crossed the amazingly long Mackinac bridge, and left the Lower Peninsula. We stopped a couple times at overlooks along the northern shore of Lake Michigan (more sand but fewer dunes) and gradually turned northwards and headed toward Painted Rocks National Seashore and the town of Munising on the southern shore of Lake Superior. We rented a hotel room and just managed to arrive in time to take the 1:00 P.M. boat tour along the 40-mile lakeshore cliffs. What a beautiful place! The cliffs along this part of Lake Superior are layered sandstone and limestone. The harder, more durable limestone is on top; sandstone is below, and so as the rock erodes, the sandstone tends to undercut the limestone resulting in remarkable formations. Beautiful as these rock sculptures are, it's not what makes this place famous. Mineral-rich water seeps out of the rocks and down over the cliffs. Iron paints streaks of red upon the cliffs; Manganese paints with a black brush; and copper traces brilliant greens and turquoise strokes. Water heavy with tannin from the forests above adds a wash of gold and brown to the rock surfaces. If I'd had ten rolls of film with me I would have snapped every picture on the rolls. (Unfortunately the day

was overcast and the few pictures I did take simply don't do the place justice.) I wanted extreme close-ups of the cliffs to capture the natural "abstract" paintings of the rocks. Indeed it sometimes looked as if someone had used a palette knife and applied thick smears of oil paint. The cliffs descend immediately into the lake; there is only a single beach along the shoreline. Mostly, the boats can glide right next to the cliffs, almost close enough for its passengers to reach out and touch the cliffs. As we headed back to harbor, the wind started picking up and grew to gale strength. I thought about humming *The Edmund Fitzgerald*, but couldn't remember the tune. But we made it back safely. We enjoyed a great steak dinner made even more tasty from having missed a real supper the night before and having skipped breakfast that day too.

The last day in Michigan, Friday, we stopped briefly at the very strange "Da Yoopers Tourist Trap and Museum" which our friend, Jae Adams had recommended to us. Da Yoopers (as in Upper-Peninsula resident) is "the home of the world's largest running chainsaw, the largest working rifle in the world, the world's largest Yooper gift shop, an underground mining display, a Camp-Go-For-Beer, and free bathrooms (with flush toilets)." We stayed long enough to buy Jae some suitable thank-you present for having suggested we find the place. If you're interested, check out their web site at www.dayoopers.com.

But finally it was time to head eastward out of Michigan and toward Ashland Wisconsin. We stayed one night at the Hotel Chequamagon, an elegant, wonderful hotel that pretends to be a refurbished hotel from the 19th century. We hope to schedule a WisCon retreat there next fall and wanted to gather information about it in preparation. We enjoyed really excellent meals there and spent Saturday and Sunday traveling slowly south back to Madison, stopping along the way when we found something interesting.

It was a good trip.



Roadside picnic lunch spot



Comments on Intercourse №. 101, cont'd

▣ Donya Hazard White

I'm glad you got to eat at L'Etoile while you were at WisCon. It's such a wonderful restaurant! Scott and I try to go when we can afford it, usually once every 18 months or so, for a really special occasion. We also like to stop in the downstairs L'Etoile on Farmers' Market restaurant for croissants, and look for the L'Etoile buyer at the Farmers' Market pulling their wagons around the square.

If I recall, we read Le Guin's *The Telling* for a book discussion, and someone at the meeting talked a bit about the use of Buddhist ideas in the book, particularly in connection with the kinds and uses of storytelling. Do you *not* see any likely influence by Buddhism on *The Telling*? Should I stop spreading a misconception?

Speaking of Buddhism, I enjoyed reading your Japanese trip prep reading list and the short reviews in which you hint at how Buddhism has influenced own philosophy. I love the idea that any activity no matter how mundane can be transformed into a work of art with the proper attitude. I think many of the moments I would describe as joyful in my life have occurred when I'm wholly focused upon and involved in a task. But one Buddhist idea that I've always felt skeptical about is the idea that one can easily divide "controllable" things in our life from the "uncontrollable" things. It seems to be a theory that might too easily be used to rationalize a conviction that one cannot change something that is merely difficult (or supremely difficult) to change, and to excuse oneself from the attempt. People who say, for instance, that "you can't change human nature," or who warn younger/radical people not to be so impatient because people/attitudes/institutions can't be changed in a lifetime -- all seem to be operating from a possibly flawed definition of what is controllable. They define those things as uncontrollable those things that they fear or depend upon. I guess I just hate to start out by declaring some things automatically outside my control. But maybe I'm applying this idea to the wrong scale of things, since I admit the idea works well when one is talking about such uncontrollable things as, for instance....

You know, just now, I can't think of any way to conclude that sentence such that entirely I agree. Maybe I would make a bad Buddhist. I think I am at the moment defining the word "controllable" as "subject to change," and maybe that's not a valid interpretation

in this context. I could possibly identify with the need to identify as uncontrollable as those things for which the effort necessary to control them is too costly. This is getting sort of confusing and probably way off the track of your lovely sign-posted book review depiction of Buddhist thought.

I love the way you prepare for a trip by immersing yourself in books about the place you're going to travel to. I most often end up doing a lot more reading about a place *after* I've been there; the trip wets my appetite. And then I want to go back to look again at the details I missed. Your method is much more logical than mine! I'm looking forward to reading part 2 of your Japan trip.

▣ Karen Summerly

I laughed at how you Californians have to baby tulips (six weeks refrigeration!) to get them to bloom just one season. We don't think of them as particularly sensitive plants here in Wisconsin. In fact, there's a strip of ground between our driveway and the house that we've got planted with Hosta plants, but which used to have a lot of tulips. They were scattered and weak-looking (because the bulbs needed to be divided) and so when I planted the Hostas, I dug up all the tulips, or I thought I did. Some bulbs escaped my shovel and each year, despite the worst I could do, they keep leaping up in the spring before the Hostas achieved maximum shading height. This has been going on for 15 years and they absolutely refuse to go away.

Thank you for the brilliant article responding to Janet's comment on health-harming athletic practices! Of course you're absolutely right. As soon as you suggested the idea that athletics are on a continuum with other kinds of work, and that many people risk their health in order to do all kinds of work, this discussion completely opened up for me. I immediately recalled part of a book I just finished, *Fast Food Nation*, in which Eric Schlosser described the tragic life of Kenny Dobbins, an employee of a slaughterhouse from age 23–39. He was a big man--muscular and 6'5" and began work in the Monfort shipping department hauling boxes as heavy as 120 pounds. He was first injured when a 90-pound box fell on him from the upper level. He caught the box, but fell against the conveyer belt and the metal teeth on the rim of the belt pierced his lower back. The company doctor diagnosed his injury as a "pulled muscle," but another doctor told him he had a pair of herniated disks. Back

surgery and a month in the hospital didn't work and pain clinic therapy didn't help much; but he returned to the slaughterhouse 14 months later. His marriage broke up amid stress and financial problems.

Kenny was an extremely loyal employee to the Monfort plant since it had given him a good job despite the fact that he couldn't read and had no skills other than his strength. He volunteered to move to work at the Greeley plant as a strike-break worker because he didn't like unions. His new boss told him that his light-duty (injury) restrictions didn't apply at the new plant and he was once again assigned to heavy, physical labor carving meat carcasses. When the pain became unbearable, he was transferred to ground beef, and then to rendering. "According to a former manager at the Greeley plant, Monfort was trying to get rid of Kenny, trying to make his work so unpleasant that he'd quit. Kenny didn't realize it." Kenny remarried and kept working. He needed the paycheck.

"One day he was unexpectedly called to work over the weekend. There had been a problem with *Salmonella* contamination. The plant needed to be disinfected, and some of the maintenance workers had refused to do it. In his street clothes, Kenny began cleaning the place, climbing into tanks and spraying a liquid chlorine mix. Chlorine is a hazardous chemical that can be inhaled or absorbed through the skin, causing a litany of health problems. Workers who spray it need to wear protective gloves, safety goggles, a self-contained respirator, and full coveralls. Kenny's supervisor gave him a paper dust mask to wear, but it quickly dissolved. After eight hours working with the chlorine in unventilated areas, Kenny went home and fell ill. He was rushed to the hospital and placed in an oxygen tent. His lungs had been burned by the chemicals. His body was covered in blisters. Kenny spent a month in the hospital."

Unbelievably, he returned to work. He still felt loyal to the company and was assigned an early morning shift to drive a truck carrying leftover scraps of meat within the slaughterhouse complex. The truck's windshield was filthy; the wipers and headlights didn't work. He was hit by a train and spent two weeks in the hospital recovering from injuries. Then he went back to work.

Kenny saved the life of a man in the slaughterhouse one day and received an "Outstanding Achievement" award.

Later, Kenny broke a leg and shattered an ankle in two other accidents. As a result, he wore a brace to

help him walk but still suffered extreme pain when he stood for too long. He was assigned the job of recycling knives, a job that required him to climb up and down three flights of narrow stairs with garbage bags filled with knives. While he was doing this job, he suffered a massive heart attack (which the company nurse diagnosed as a pulled muscle). Nevertheless, his union steward took him to the hospital and his life was saved.

Not long afterward, Monfort fired Kenny Dobbins. No one at Monfort gave him the news. He found out from a clerk at the insurance company when his claims were repeatedly denied. Today, Kenny's health is in very poor health. His wife is also ill with a serious kidney ailment. Both Kenny and Clara are unemployed. Kenny receives no pension from Monfort.

I've just summarized the story from Eric Schlosser's account, and I suspect the longer version in *Fast Food Nation* is also edited considerably. Schlosser tells this story to dramatically illustrate the horrible work conditions in the beef industry. But I think Kenny's experiences are probably echoed in many other industries that seek to squeeze worker salaries/benefits into the smallest possible portion of their bottom line. Some people believe that the job they have is the only one they are qualified to do. It's the job their parents did, in the case of "family careers" like fishing, mining, and lumbering. Or they think they're too old or not smart enough to re-train and start over. Some people believe that abusing their body with performance-enhancing drugs or simply pushing it beyond its capacity is the only way to achieve a goal or stay on a team. I think these assumptions and fears can be located on the same continuum, all enabled to some extent by the bosses and owners and agents and coaches and industries that benefit from human beings who put their bodies on the line for someone else's profit.

You ask, Karen, "...now suppose the young athlete is taking the same risks out of personal desire for worldwide fame and a fortune in product endorsements—any different?" You say yes. But that young person may be using performance enhancing drugs because she/he knows that other athletes are using them and if he/she doesn't take them, these other athletes will beat him. Some people believe that breaking a physical record in some sports is now only possible for those who take the drugs. Just as Kenny believed that the only job he was qualified to do depended upon him taking risks defined by people who demonstrably did not care about him, athletes goals

get tangled up with unethical “requirements” defined by those who don’t have to take the risk. I would say there is not much difference between the athlete forced by parents and those forced by the sports industry to take certain risks if they want to remain in the game.

▣ **Iyn Palao**

I’m glad you had fun at WisCon and was also sorry that you and I missed a breakfast conversation like the one we had at WisCon 25. Yes, let’s try to do it again next year.

European criticism of U.S. foreign policy tends to make me react sympathetically, but sometimes in the same breath of criticism, the European will make a scornful comment about the American attitude about smoking. I’m always taken aback because I don’t feel as sympathetic with that part of their anger toward the U.S. But you’ve put your finger on the reason for the dissonance. It would seem that in spite of their enviable record in health care, child care, etc., that *they* would be the ones out front on this issue. But I don’t get the feeling that the smoking issue is actually perceived by many Europeans as a health issue. Rather many of them seem to have classified smoking as a moral issue, about which Americans are showing their customary hypocrisy and laughable Puritanism. I would imagine that the international tobacco industries’ marketing departments are happily milking this perception as much as they can.

For a similar story about the intersection of the profit motive and health, did you happen to see the Public Television series called “Red Gold”? It’s a history and overview of our understanding of blood’s function in the body and of the industries involved in medical uses of blood. I was astonished to learn that the blood industry had a lot to do with our initial involvement in Nicaragua, because the Nicaraguan government at the time threatened to nationalize the blood collection industry.

Belated congratulations for having kicked the cigarette habit six years ago!

⊗ **Kerry Ellis**

Please keep talking about your feelings, depressed or otherwise. I’m sure it’s got to be quite disconcerting to return from the sort of journey you’ve taken and try to re-integrate your much-changed self into a world and an economy that has itself changed from the last time you knew it. Sort of like trying to shoot a moving target

from a moving platform. Take your time. Don’t be so hard on yourself. Get acquainted with this part of the world again. And try to figure out how to use the new stuff you learned about yourself on the trip to improve your life. I think it’s completely reasonable that you are feeling distracted and worried about how much harder everyday life is than you remember. But it’s just a sign that things have changed -- both inside you and outside you. You’ll find a rhythm eventually. And the process, I think, will be far from boring to your readers here in *Intercourse*.

[Sorry, this paragraph is now way out of date, but this is what I was thinking about when I read your zine:] Working on Con Jose sounds like a good thing for you to be doing right now. Why not just tell Cindy that you would like to take on the Treasurer’s position? You seem to be assuming that she doesn’t want you to do so. What if it turns out that she has been waiting for you to volunteer? And both of you end up resenting the other for the miscommunication?) You could assure her that you would understand if she feels more comfortable if you worked in a different area, but if so, could she please recommend you for a job that needs to be done elsewhere on the committee.

The next time you plan to stand around in sub-zero weather, I highly recommend that you buy the proper footwear. My favorite boots are called “UGGs.” They’re an Australian boot that has a manufacturing plant in Los Angeles and are truly wonderful (and essential for Midwestern winters). I’ve worn them in extremely cold weather -- down to -40°F and my feet have felt toasty warm for as long as I’ve been outside. The really wonderful thing about them is that they can be worn *inside* as well and don’t roast your feet. They feel, in fact, like you’re wearing slippers. I would think they’d make an excellent investment for attending winter Olympic events.

Thanks for the fine essay about what it’s like to attend the Olympics. I was confused about why you had to buy individual events tickets when I thought it was necessary to buy all tickets well before the Olympics started. But it was really fun reading about what the various venues are like for the audiences. Too bad the Luge event turns out to be so difficult to see. I wondered about who tested the suicidal Super G ski slope. (They must have had *somebody* try it out to see if it was possible to use before the big event, right?) Did American skiers get an advantage by being able to try out the slope ahead of time?

Your sidebar about your visit to Halfwhistle England and some of the conspiracy gossip you heard about Mad Cow Disease reminds me of some similar stories heard in Wisconsin lately about CWD (Chronic Wasting Disease among deer). One conspiracy theory is that the Department of Natural Resources actually planted the disease among deer in order to get rid of all the deer so that elk could be brought in to replace the deer. This apparently would benefit the DNR because the hunting license fee is higher for elk than it is for deer. sigh. Every available resource is being allocated to the CWD projects right now. The DNR is hurting badly as are most of our programs. Bush vetoed aid to Wisconsin for the fight against CWD and the state is kicking in very little money. But everyone expects the DNR to take care of the problem and some are mad because we won't be able to test every deer for every hunter who wants reassurance that their deer is safe to eat.

▣ Guy Thomas

Well I hope that by this time your computer problems have been solved and that the back house project has been finished or is at least well under way. I'm sorry to hear that you and Carol have been having difficulties.

Yes, I did see *Attack of the Clones*. My younger brother is a huge *Star Wars* fan and we have a sentimental connection around the Lucas films because I took him to see his first *Star Wars* movie. (At 7 years old, Danny emerged from the theater and said, "That was the *best* movie I've ever seen!!") So Dan sent me an email and asked me if Scott and I wanted to see the midnight premiere of *Clones* in Milwaukee with his wife Kelly and him. When Scott found out that the premiere would be on a Wednesday night, he said no, he didn't want to drive back from Milwaukee so late the night before a work day. My brother and Scott have an amusing sort of relationship and so when Danny wrote back and said that he understood, that when *he* got old, he'd probably not want to stay up so late either... Well, suffice to say we found ourselves in the parking lot of a Milwaukee theater at about 11 P.M. one fall night! The parking lot scene was actually a lot more fun than the movie itself. It was interesting to talk to a bunch of kids willing to stand in line for hours (or even days in the case of the previous *Star Wars* film). The film itself was gorgeous but really, really stupid.

I think it would have been possible to write a believ-

able script in which a very smart, responsible and heroic woman stateswoman might fall in love with a younger man. He might have been portrayed as equally smart and heroic. He might have been portrayed as impatient to do the right thing and constantly held back by cowardly, older establishment-type leaders. The two lovers might have been attracted to one another because they both knew what had to be done politically/physically while all those around them were cautioning patience or even cowardice. But that is not how Anekin was portrayed. He was a surly, immature teenager that any 28-year old female world leader would have brushed aside at first glance. Their romance was entirely unbelievable, but of course, it is the foundation of the entire *Star Wars* epic. Ah well. More proof that Lucas really should have gotten someone else to write these movies.

Scott and I met a couple people at Readercon in Boston who raise service monkeys. This couple showed us pictures and talked to us for more than an hour about their experiences raising two monkeys to the age of 5 (at which time they are mature enough to start their service training). The monkeys are eventually trained to pick up things for their human, to move the human's feet back onto the wheelchair step, to fetch things and do all manner of things to help handicapped persons live independent lives. The good thing about service monkeys (as compared to service dogs) is that the monkeys have much longer life expectancies. Have you ever heard of this program? If so, what do you think about it? The two people we met in Boston had great stories about their monkeys. Obviously they'd formed a bond with them that was very similar to that of a parent-child relationship and I wondering how difficult it was going to be for them to give up the monkeys when they were old enough to start their formal training.

▣ Elizabeth Fox

I'm totally with you when it comes to not wanting to have the optical laser operation. I know several people whose eyes have not been improved by the procedure and one of them still experiences constant pain as a result of the operation. No, I think I'll stick with my glasses thank you.

I agree with you too that Jane's decision to ask for help from her friends was indeed a sign of strength, not weakness. And I like your comment that Jane's scar might be considered a "warrior mark."

Your color choices for your house, chimney and bougainvillea sound beautiful!

But have you tried making the kind of puddings that are mentioned in O'Brian's Aubrey and Maturin novels? The ones that swim in grease and are apparently made with meat?

I certainly wouldn't call Le Guin's recent books "disingenuous." You say that you would "feel it was reasonable for her to say she'd changed her mind about some things, or had new ideas she wanted to explore. It makes much more sense to [you] that a writer is like god and knows everything about his world."

Well ... obviously, none of us can know *everything* about our own world. Why do you think a writer should know everything about their fictional world? You could only believe that this was possible if the fictional world was limited to a much smaller scope and diversity than the real thing, if it was limited to the inhabitants, ideas, images, places, and events that can be imagined by one person. A writer who pretends to know everything about their world is simply demonstrating how narrowly they have defined the possibilities of their fictional world. To be realistic, a fantasy writer should acknowledge to themselves and their readers that a story told within the setting of a fictional world offers only a sliver, a tiny peek at what might lie beyond that moment and that place. No author lives long enough to explore every corner of their created worlds, so each story can be seen as a sort of "discovery" of another country. But the thing that really impresses me about Le Guin's writing, is that she has realized that she can return even to well-explored neighborhoods of her world and *still* discover new insights. The younger Le Guin who explored those places was looking for certain things and making assumptions -- just as we all do in our own lives in our own world. For instance, we can all recall conversations or episodes in our youth that we now consider in an entirely different way (with insights won from experience and wisdom). Le Guin has also been looking behind the assumptions and blind spots set up in her youth and has discovered a greater depth and history in the places and people she invented long ago.

It's sort of ironic, Elizabeth. Several of us have been mourning the fact that we have mothers who don't see us well enough or at all. You seem to wish that your mother didn't see you so well as she does. Your worries about women seeing you too clearly seems to be based on the idea that the real you isn't worth loving. It's risky,

I know, but the payoff for letting a friend (or mother) see the real you is that she might love you in spite of your faults. I think that's a pretty worthwhile risk to take.

Good zine, Elizabeth!

▣ Debbie Notkin

How did you resolve the situation with Lyn's contribution to the biology project and the project manager who "showed ownership" for Lyn's piece? I'd like to know because it reminds me of situations I find myself in fairly frequently at work, when it's necessary to juggle one person's creative contribution to a project with the sometimes arbitrary opinion of those in charge of the project.

I know what you mean about feeling a little weird about WisCon in the year after you chaired the programming department. I felt something similar the year after I chaired WisCon 20. And Pat Hario went from the total immersion of hotel liaison last year to absolutely no involvement at all this year, and she experienced an extreme sense of disconnection at WisCon 26. I think I understand a little better what worldcon committee members must go through after several *years* of involvement in planning an event that suddenly ends in one weekend.

I hope you've been able to convince Stephanie's parents to let her stay with you for a while. If it were possible, would you like Stephanie to move in with you permanently, or at least until she's an adult?

What all has to be done to a house to make it earthquake-resistant? Is it expensive?

Scieska's theory that reading has become a gendered activity among grade school kids ("Reading is for *girls!*") is sure an interesting development, if true. Is it possible that *this time* girls' greater verbal ability is actually being recognized as a prestigious activity (rather than a nerdy or wimpy one) and that boys are disavowing interest in it because they fear they will not be able to compete? This is sort of like girls saying that math is for boys, because of similar fears of inadequacy. Interesting.

Maybe I am just being paranoid, but I see ominous connections between the kind of privacy loss in which "my neighbors and I know the same stuff about each other" and "the people who are trying to control me know more about me than I know about them." Ashcroft's proposal for a tipsters' program, if accepted, would lead to a situation in which, since my neighbors know so much about me, I have to be worried that some of them will

try to use this information against me.

Have you got a theory about why the spiral dingbats (at the beginning of Grayscale mailing comments) in the pdfs I send to you sometimes print correctly and sometimes print as filled-in circles?

▣ Arthur Hlavaty

I'm glad your liver is doing better with Serzone, which sounds like an appropriately fannish sort of drug (or fanzine or maybe a variety of consuite).

Good point to Avedon that if Gore had been president in the post-9/11 world, that the right wing wouldn't have let him do anything. Can you imagine the uproar if a Democrat had proposed the gigantic new bureaucracy as the Homeland Security Department?

Comments on Intercourse No. 102

▣ Janet Jafier

I was so sorry to hear about your sad news from Debbie. It made reading your happy journal excerpts in *Dances with Ultrasound* all the more poignant. You and Matt are in my thoughts. I hope you are doing OK. Take care.

I was bemused by your contradictory feelings about the compliments your doctors give you about your health-related competence and knowledge. (I also admire you tremendously on this.) On the one hand, you seem pleased to have your diligence, intelligence and research recognized, and rightfully feel proud that you are able to make much better use of information provided by physicians than most people do. On the other hand, you still want to be cared for, watched over, and supervised (?) by those physicians to the same degree that less informed and possibly more careless patients. I wonder if physicians feel that their major role in most people's health, beyond crisis intervention, is to educate people so that they know what good health means, and are able to watch out for problems and danger signals? Perhaps good physicians schedule more frequent appointments with those patients who they feel will tend to ignore or fail to notice their symptoms, or with those patients who do not want to (or are not able to) take responsibility for understanding their health problems. In that case, maybe it is a reasonable thing for physicians to feel that they have little to offer you and that it is safe to trust you to come in to see them when necessary.

Gary Trudeau poked fun at the NYC firefighter groupies sometime last year in the *Doomesbury* strips. It

sounded to me like it was probably true.

I liked your piece on the slam poetry sessions. I know a few people in Madison who are involved in this stuff. I've never attended a performance, but it was interesting to read how you viewed the scene from your perspective as a first-time attendee. I have attended a few storytelling performances at Room of One's Own and at other local bookstores, which I suppose must be part of what you referred to as the "whole 'spoken word' scene out there that's distinct from the slam scene." I got interested in the storytelling scene for its not-necessarily-for-kids ambiance, and because of my friendship with Elizabeth Matson, who you may have met at WisCon. Elizabeth is a writer and storyteller. She's currently doing post-graduate study in folklore in North Carolina. I've stayed interested in storytelling because it seems to me to be something that I may be interested in trying someday.

Yours and my post-WisCon 26 reading matched up pretty closely. I too read Justine Larbalestier's *The Battle of the Sexes* and Carol Emshwiller's *The Mount* right after the convention. (But I read Hiromi Goto's *The Kappa Child* just before WisCon.) I was really impressed by *The Battle of the Sexes*. I liked the way Justine followed a single theme from '30s pulp fiction all the way into current SF. She made connections and pointed out continuities in the literary conversation about gender that I had never noticed. Like you, I am still thinking about Emshwiller's *The Mount*. It's a deceptively simple story that hides some really complex insights into what it means to be human, to be free, and about the evil of slavery and its repercussions. I'm hoping that the story will hook my 11-year-old nephew and inspire thoughtful digressions for him too.

Scott and I got hooked on *The Sopranos* the same way you did -- hearing about it, renting the DVDs, catching up with the repeats of earlier seasons, and finally watching the current season. That led to *Six Feet Under* and the occasional episode of *Sex and the City*. Later on in your zine you complained about how slowly HBO releases its DVDs for their popular shows. I think the explanation clearly lies in the fact that so many of us got "hooked" on the DVDs and then couldn't bare to wait one or two years to find out what happens next. So we bit the bullet and subscribed to HBO, which is exactly what those TV marketers want us to do.

I think the biggest danger of not fighting the notion that one should care more about tragedies that happen in our own country more than those that happen far away,

is that we might ALSO grow to accept the idea that a different morality applies for us the further from home we act. That is, It seems to me that Americans are more likely to excuse or accept illegal acts in foreign countries than we are to excuse or accept those same acts close to home. The current administration is sure pushing the idea that civil liberties are only for Americans in America. Torture is OK as long as its conducted against the bad guys by other countries, and then we can use the information gathered by torture without a twinge of conscience. And of course there are those tribunals and Cuban prisons.... I think the media's tendency to downplay the humanity of non-Americans feeds our willingness to rationalize moral blindness as it applies *elsewhere*.

You seemed astonished that Kerry actually likes traffic circles. I do too. I am growing to really hate how American traffic signals are interpreted by stressed-out angry drivers. A yellow traffic light means keep going and in fact if the person in front of you went through on a yellow, you can keep going too (even if the light's turned red) as long as you're close on the other guy's bumper. I get honked at regularly when I drive through town because I actually stop at yellow lights. Traffic circles seem eminently reasonable in comparison to the confrontational opportunities in an intersection.

I admired your response to Elizabeth about different kinds of friendships.

I have felt the same way you do about how -- once you've told or written about an event -- that becomes the default style for describing the event in the future. I wrote my trip report of Scott's and my Michigan vacation before I'd told many people about it. Several times afterward I had to restrain myself from telling the "long" written version when it was inappropriate. Nevertheless it felt wrong to skip parts or tell it out of order.

□ Douglas Barbour

W as it only the pressure of your friends Bert and Olga that made you and Sharon decide to see movies again? I imagine you must be constantly bombarded by friends asking you if you've seen this movie or that. It seems that movies have taken up the role that books used to have in our culture -- as subjects of conversation that one could generally bring up among a random group of people and usually find several people who are able to have something to say. Scott and I tend to see about one movie a week, except during the summer months, when the movie offerings are often not worthwhile and

when we have so many other things going on to take up our time.

Thank you very much for emailing me your review of Robinson's *The Years of Rice and Salt*. I agree with you that this novel is comparable in scope and complexity to his *Mars* series.

□ Avedon Carol

I hope your mom is doing better since breaking her hip. I had to have one of my hips replaced a couple years ago, and have found the technology of hip replacement to be really remarkable. Medical advancements have dramatically improved in this area, not only in dealing with pain but in providing a durable strong prosthesis. Did your mom get a hip replacement?

I'm sorry to hear that your job interview didn't result in your getting the job. What kind of job was it that you felt it had your "name written all over it"?

What an excellent response to the challenge several of us made to your assertion that Gore's response to 9/11 would have been much different than Bush2's. You've followed the news about the post-Clinton failures in intelligence much closer than I have, and I must agree that it makes sense that our preparation for and possibly prevention of the events of 9/11 may have been far different had more of Clinton's policies remained in effect.

Nevertheless, it's hard for me to believe that if the planes had managed to destroy the Trade Towers in spite of those policies, that Gore's performance would have differed significantly from Bush's. If anything, I think he may have been pressured into responding militarily sooner than Bush did in Afghanistan, and that any hint of hesitation on the part of Gore's administration would have been interpreted as weakness. I don't think that Gore would have done the right thing any more than Bush has done. (My opinion is that the 9/11 acts of terrorism are illegal acts that should be dealt with by the world court and the United Nations, not acts of war to be avenged by one nation against another.) I think we'd still be trying to bulldoze the rest of the world, trying to force them to go along with doing it the way we want to do it.

Ah yes, George R.R. Martin's fantasy doorsteps... have you read them? I'd been hearing lots of good things about this "trilogy" and thought it would be a great idea to bring the first two books along with me on our vacation. Indeed they made great beach and camp reading material. I had lots of fun in the Westeros. But then, a

couple days after returning to work, I was standing in line at the cafeteria when someone saw me holding book 2. I was only a few pages from the end. We talked a bit about how cool it was that there was no all-good family vs. another all-bad family, and about how we liked the growing complexity of the characters. But then this guy dropped the bomb. "It's too bad that the fourth book is late, isn't it?" What? What fourth book??! It's a TRILOGY isn't it??

Obviously I hadn't been paying attention. The guy laughed and said, "Oh yeah, you'll be reading this series for 10 years!" Damn it. I will, assuming George actually survives long enough to finish writing it.

□ Donya Hazard White

I'm very glad to hear how well Amber is doing. I hope she does learn to use you as a resource. It all sounds good.

Someday I hope to be able to attend one of your Solstice parties. I love to hear about the elaborate stage decorating you do for these things.

What a cool idea for collecting 40 fishy things for Allan. That must have been fun!

□ Lisa Hirsch

Very cool cover, Lisa. It got me to thinking of the possibilities of a three dimensional, combination family tree/Langdon chart. Something like that would be useful for some extremely complex, multi-book, epic novels by George R. R. Martin for instance.

It's good to hear how much you're enjoying your work at Documentum.

I read Varley's *The Golden Gobe* a few years ago. What I liked about it was that Varley seemed to be referring to and critiquing Robert Heinlein. The father of the main character of *Globe* (if I remember clearly) was the ultimate, competent Heinlein man and Varley turns him into a villain.

Yes, the *Super Relationship Stories* cover for *Inter-course* was artwork Photoshop-manipulated from an old pulp magazine cover. In the same month, I did similar vandalism on another cover for a poster for WisCon 27 and for another apa cover. It was lots of fun.

Your paranoia about 80s inflation being a conspiracy to kill off the powerful social movements of the 60s and 70s reminds me of MY current paranoia. I keep wondering if They've infiltrated the major polls and are manipulating figures on public opinion to support

Their own positions. Why else would everyone I know be against an invasion of Iraq when the polls all say that Americans support a war in such overwhelming numbers? Well, I don't really believe there's a conspiracy, but sometimes I want to believe it. One day "The King Is Naked Poll" would discover that really, we've all been skeptical of Bush ever since he stole the election, but the truth of our solidarity has been hidden from us. If only.

□ Elizabeth Fox

I liked your story about Roland, the flea market vendor. And I'm sorry to hear about Pat's dad's cancer diagnosis. I hope he does well with treatment.

Yes, I'm now showering in the new bathroom. And happily for visitors to our house I am no longer urging them to go up to look at the new bathroom. They can if they want to. of course, but I don't bring it up anymore.

□ Kerry Ellis

I'm glad to hear that there are some enjoyable aspects about your job at Borders. Are you looking for other work at the same time, or are you happy with this job while you decide what you want to do next? Too bad travel agency career hadn't been turned into such a dead end job by the airlines; it would be cool if you could make use of your travel experiences to help other people travel (and do more of your own traveling).

□ D Potter

Sure, thank you; please send me a copy of the *Basic Kata* I missed from you.

Speaking of Jane Austen, I just read a hilarious send-up of *Pride and Prejudice* in Carol Emshwiller's collection of short stories, *Report to the Men's Club*. The short story is "Prejudice and Pride."

□ Karen Summerly

It's good to hear about the joyful belly-dancing part of your life and that you are enjoying working with your fellow dancers so much. And of course I wish you well in all your endeavors.

□ Guy Thomas

Patricia McConnel, animal behaviorist and radio talk-show host, happened to be broadcasting her

pet advice show on the radio earlier today while I was writing comments. I wasn't listening too carefully, but I remember she was dealing in depth with several dog-owners and their pets' problem with inappropriate barking--especially around other dogs. McConnel is another trainer in favor of positive reinforcements rather than negative. If I remember correctly, she advised one of the callers to set up a series of interactions with another pet owner and dog. The exercises would start out with the dogs separated by a great distance, and gradually as the exercises progressed, the owners would let their dogs get closer and closer. Every time the first dog owners dog (Bart) saw the other dog (Spot), and before Bart starts barking, Bart's owner would distract Bart with something exquisitely wonderful, something Bart absolutely adores (a piece of meat, a toy, whatever) and praise Bart mightily. McConnel says that eventually Bart will associate the presence of another dog with the occurrence of wonderful things and will stop barking whenever he sees another dog.

I loved your overall point that this dog-training lesson can be applied to larger life lessons and how we sometimes focus on the method we think should work, rather than looking at the result we want and what might be the best way to get it. The cycle gets really painful when morality is bound up with people's understanding of the correct method, because doing it differently then gets defined as a sort of sin.

▣ Debbie Notkin

You wrote: *"I completely agree that 'wallowing in discouragement and pessimism' isn't good strategy for depressives, but I've found that it can work for me, much the same way it works for you."*

I think you're wrong in your interpretation of my behavior, Debbie. Wallowing *doesn't* work for me as a positive strategy. I have sometimes gotten pretty discouraged when I've been involved in a project with a group whose members seem to be losing interest in the project, but the end result of that discouragement does not leave me stronger and better equipped to handle the situation. It results in my cutting back in my own involvement because the feelings of discouragement make it less worthwhile for me. If I continue feeling discouraged, I finally decide to turn completely away from the project. This happened with *Janus/Aurora* and also with my interaction with WisCon during the 1980s.

Jim Hudson and I had a conversation after WisCon that leads me to think that he's got a similar theory about me, and I am wondering if you two have had a discussion about this.

After several of the last WisCons, I've felt incredibly energized because of the influx of volunteers, ideas and enthusiasm for future WisCons. This is WAY better for me than the negative feelings I've sometimes had after WisCon which, believe me, do not rebound for me in any positive way. These moods are things I have to pull myself out of, distract myself from, and counter with lots of work.

At the end of WisCon 26 I got really excited by all the imaginative discussion and volunteering I heard during the dead dog party about WisCon 27. I experienced no post-WisCon depression this year, none at all. I attempted to continue that discussion on line and got a bit angry at Jim Hudson, who seemed to want us to postpone that discussion until later in the year partially because he felt bad about having been left out of that dead-dog discussion. I used the phrase "playing without adult supervision" to describe his reaction and then we had a couple more sharp words about it on-line. But we got together in person and dealt with most of the issues and got over that rough spot pretty quickly. But it's not settled completely in my mind because Jim still seems to discount some of my concerns as artifacts of what he thinks of as my normal post-WisCon negative feelings, rather than perceptions of real issues (and ignoring my almost completely positive post-WisCon mood this year). In any case, I've continued encouraging those who want to talk about some long-range planning issues for WisCon and that feels very good.

▣ Enigma

Have you seen the film, *Enigma*, (starring Dougray Scott, Kate Winslet, Jeremy Northam, and Saffron Burrows, written by Tom Stoppard)? I really liked this fictional story based on the British community of WWII code breakers at Blechley, but I've been a little bewildered that I haven't seen even a hint of my own interpretation in any of the reviews I've read about this movie. There is, of course, the surface story of the investigation of a possible spy, and the background story of painful wartime choices. "Everyone fights their own war." says one character during a tense moment in the story when a horrid choice must be made between saving lives or preventing

the Nazis from concluding that the Allies have broken the German code. But to me the most interesting layer of the film involved the role of the women of Blechley, who had been recruited in the same way as the male math wizards--for their intelligence, for their ability to solve riddles and puzzles, for their mathematical abilities. But unlike their male counterparts who were assigned as code-breakers, the women were made secretaries and clerks. Kate Winslet's character spells this out for the main character, but the guy never uses that information to help him understand the strange behavior of another Blechley woman with whom he had fallen in love. The spy master too, only suspects that this woman may have turned traitor as a dupe to a lover who convinced her to help him; he never considers the idea that she may have

decided to act on her own and that she is smart enough to have laid a false trail and tricked him. In fact both main female characters in the film and several minor women characters are revealed to have a lot more freedom of action than any of the men at Blechley, simply because the guys don't consider that the women may also have "their own wars" to fight. It seemed clear to me at the end of the film that the mysterious woman "spy" had fooled everyone, partly by using men's assumption that she was incapable of doing so. Anyway, I almost feel that the film's theme continues into the film reviews, since none of the reviewers I've read seems to have noticed the role of women in the movie. I'd really appreciate others' reaction to this movie. I'm hoping that I'm not seeing Entwive solutions again where the don't exist....