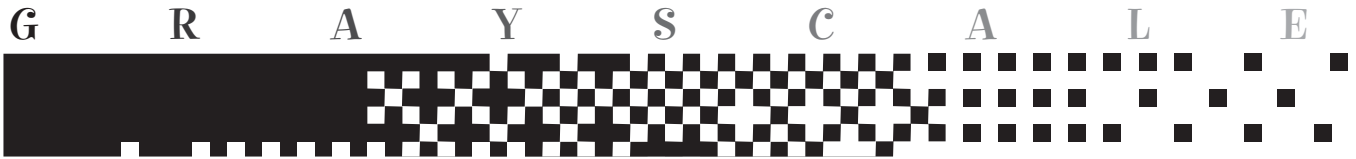


The illusion of gray created  
by an arrangement of  
alternating black and white dots



This is Grayscale #31, a zine for *Intercourse*, and an Obsessive Press Publication #277, from Jeanne Gomoll, 2825 Union Street, Madison Wisconsin 53704-5136. 608-246-8857. ArtBrau@globaldialog.com

15 August 2003

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[JG] Last week I received notice that the Department of Natural Resources has decided to eliminate all three graphic design positions. All three of us graphic artists went up to the Bureau Chief's office, one after another, and were told that our last day will be August 1, 2003. I've been with the Department for almost 24 years. My co-worker, Georgine Price has worked here 30 years; and Linda Pohlod has been a so-called "limited term employee" for at least 10 years. A lot of other people received "at risk" notices the same day I did, but I haven't heard any numbers yet. Our bosses are "respecting our privacy" and have not yet publicized the extent of the carnage. Layoffs are happening in most other Wisconsin departments as well. All of it's due to the state's serious budget deficit. Wisconsin's financial woes are rooted in former Governor Tommy Thompson's exuberant spending sprees on the prison system and road-building. In spite of the market crash, prison and road-building lobbyists are now successfully protecting their subsidies, and as a result, Wisconsin's educational system and any other programs disliked by Republicans are suffering. The DNR is, of course, a prime target. (On the other hand, because it is protected by the road-building lobbyists, Scott's job at the Department of Transportation is safe. And that's a good thing.) Most of us at the DNR believe that the legislature is consciously (and gleefully) dismantling our department. What was formerly one of the most progressive, most effective, and most respected natural resources departments in the United States is being reduced to a toothless, badly wounded organization. It's sad.

I go back and forth feeling angry and scared and overwhelmed by everything I need to do in the upcoming weeks. But I think I'm doing OK. Mostly I am focused on making the best use of my time left at the DNR to get ready to do freelance work. I've been burning cds so that I have copies of job files from the past couple decades, putting together a resume, designing business cards, and contacting DNR clients to let them know that I will be available to take jobs as a private contractor. I'm registering with the state procurement office so that state employees can legally hire me as a contractor. I'm making plans to upgrade my equipment and the electrical service in my office at home. My bosses may have chosen the discrete path in order to "respect the privacy" of laid off personnel, but I'm not going quietly. I just sent out a first round of about 350 emails to DNR staff for whom I've done design work in the past decade. The news of the elimination of the graphic artists' section will come as a complete shock to almost all of them, and I suspect that a fair number of them are going to express their anger to upper management about the situation. Not that I think this will have any effect on the decision to eliminate our positions, but I'm glad to provide the first shockwave of criticism to those who made the decision. I've already begun hearing back from some of my clients, and most of them sound really worried about how they're going to get their publications designed and have promised to send me work if they can. Within a week after receiving my layoff notice two clients have already promised to send me work. I have no idea how many real jobs this will actually yield, but I'm very hopeful that I will be able to support myself financially.

Some of the time left until August 1, I'll spend organizing files for when we're gone and finishing up jobs that we accepted before the layoff notice, especially for potential future clients. I'm also keeping an eye on the job bulletins, because in spite of everything, I'd really rather keep getting a paycheck every two weeks than take this huge, unplanned risk and deal with the chronic uncertainty of the feast or famine freelance life. In fact I have already applied for a graphic design job. It is the one and only graphic artist position currently being offered by any state agency in Wisconsin. It would be a one-step demotion for me (Senior Graphic Designer to Graphic Designer) at the UW Medical School; nevertheless, I'd be able to retain my current salary if I get it. Unfortunately, the deadline for automatic transfers has already passed. I've submitted my résumé, but many other folks have applied too. So I'm proceeding on the assumption that I won't in fact get this job and will be working from home starting in August.

The odd thing is that even though I am scared about the uncertainties of starting my own business, at times I also find myself nervous about applying for other jobs. I'm not scared that I *won't* get the job; I'm scared that I *will*, and that then I'll never find out if I can make a go of a freelance business. The tricky thing is that the only way I will qualify for unemployment insurance is if I apply for at least two jobs each week starting with the first week in August. Freelance income doesn't count. I don't have to report this income. Apparently I could make a million dollars one week and as long as I was applying for jobs regularly, they'd still send me an unemployment check every week. (The assumption is, I guess, that I'm doing freelance work just to "tide me over" until I get a real job.) Anyway, I guess it's a good sign that I'm looking forward to starting my own business to the extent that the chance of finding another job actually feels like something to avoid.

When I'm feeling angry, it's generally about the fact that I'm being laid off only three years before I am eligible to take an early retirement. Georgine is only 2 years away. Both of us have a huge amount of saved-up sick leave, which is very valuable in the Wisconsin state service, and one of the reasons why people tend to stay with the state after they've built up enough seniority. Upon retirement, the hours of the retiree's sick leave are added up and matched by the state. This number is then multiplied by the retiree's hourly wage, and that amount is credited to the retiree for continuation of health insurance benefits. The number of sick leave hours I have right now would yield about \$35,000, or about 5 years worth of health care benefits after retirement. But since I can't retire, I am going to lose it

all. (On the other hand, if I get the UW Medical School job, I will be able to take those hours with me, which would of course be a great reason to take the job if only for a few years.)

When I'm feeling scared, it's mostly about losing those bi-weekly paychecks. It's been a long time since I worried about paying basic bills and it scares me to think about going back to that again. I'm also worried about whether I will be able to deal with the business of running a freelance business. I'm not all that good at keeping track of accounts and I tend to get buried in work to the point where it's only when I emerge from a project that I realize I haven't thought much about what I'm going to do *next*. This happens to me every year after WisCon. And clearly this behavior is something I will have to change because I will need to be constantly thinking ahead to make sure I've got jobs scheduled for future weeks and months. But at this point, despite my doubts, I think freelancing is the thing I need to do, and I'm going to go for it and try my best. I do not want to take a non-artist job with the state for three years. I shocked my DNR human resources adviser by not expressing much interest in looking for non-artist transfer possibilities within the DNR. But I will not go back to typing for a living. Or answering angry telephone calls at the Information Desk. I will not allow my computer graphics skills to languish, and make it much more difficult to get back into the graphics field in the future. More importantly I love this work, and want to keep doing it. So I guess I'm not as scared as I *could* be, because if I was, I'd probably have begged for that Information Desk position.

So despite the flashes of anger and fear, I think I'm doing fine. The layoff notice didn't come as a complete surprise. I think I may have mentioned the possibility to some of you already. I've worked in several bureaus in the DNR; but the graphic artists have never been considered central to any of those bureaus, so whenever cuts were called for, we were always listed as expendable. This is because we work for the whole DNR, not for any one bureau. So when the cutbacks became so severe this year and real layoffs had to be done, we were among the first sacrificed by our bureau (which probably uses our services less than any other bureau we've ever joined). The graphic artists are currently located in the IT department, an arrangement that can only be explained if you assume that it's logical to group people who work on computers together. A lot of DNR staff are really angry that this single bureau which is largely uninvolved with print publications has deprived the whole Department of vital services. But that's the way it's going to go.

Despite draconian cutbacks in the DNR budget (on top of the position eliminations), which will mean an inevitable reduction in the number of DNR publications, some things will still have to be published (including a number of legislatively-mandated pubs) and will need layout and design services contracted from the outside because they are way too complex and high-end to be done with word processing programs. I intend to get as many of those jobs as I can. The DNR spends \$1.5 million each year on printed publications. So far the prediction that the Internet will make print obsolete has not come to pass. The number of publications will no doubt decrease, but I predict that the amount of money that the DNR will pay for those publications that survive will skyrocket. It may even turn out that the bureaucrats will change their minds in not too many years about the business sense of getting rid of its graphic artists, that is, if they can shift their focus from the elimination of positions to changes that actually save money. If they do, I have automatic reinstatement rights for the next 5 years, and who knows, maybe I'll still retire out of the DNR. I doubt it though.

I'm glad, in a way, that the news came in early June. If it had come any earlier, the stress of my impending layoff *plus* WisCon would have pushed both Scott and I over the edge. It's hard anyway. We had both been happily anticipating a slower, calmer, enjoyable Summer to follow the blistering franticness of the Spring. No such luck now. We had been planning to buy a new used car right after WisCon too, but we're putting that off now. Well, we won't be taking a long driving vacation in September as planned either, so the car thing isn't a big issue now. But I know Scott is really disappointed. He was looking forward to car shopping.

Years and years ago, when I was a teenager, I drove my dad's car to the grocery store. He'd just had the car tuned up, but apparently one of the spark plugs was loose. As I drove home, the spark plug jiggled out of its slot and became lodged against the accelerator. Every time I hit the accelerator pedal, the car would speed up obediently ... and then would lock at that speed. I could go faster, but never slower. By the time I pulled into the driveway I was going way too fast. I had to put the car into neutral and then turn off the motor to avoid a collision with the garage. I still remember dad standing in the front yard with a rake in his hand and his eyes huge as he stared at me barreling into the driveway. Well Scott and I both feel like the accelerator on our lives has gotten jammed somehow, and even though we'd planned to hit the brakes right after WisCon, we're still racing at breakneck speed.

There's so much to do, so many decisions to make.

Scott is being extraordinarily supportive, of course. I've been comparing some of the things he's said in the last couple weeks with what my co-workers' partners have been saying to them. Georgine's partner, Joel, attempted to pressure her into applying for a transfer to that dreadful information desk job, saying that she should be able to tough it out for just two years (so that she could keep her sick-leave-to-health-care-insurance benefits). Linda's partner, Joe, seems to be taking out his own fear and anger on Linda, frequently bursting out with things like, "You have to find a job right away!!" and forcing her to spend a lot of time and energy reassuring him, while she hides her own fears. Both Georgine and Linda have decided to go freelance too, but neither of them has an office set up at home right now and neither has done any freelance work before. In contrast, when I told him the bad news, Scott immediately assured me that he would support my going freelance, even if it meant that I wouldn't be able to bring in much or any money right away because I'd have to invest in some equipment at the start. He assured me we could survive for a while on his salary, and that I shouldn't worry about the mortgage. Hearing him say that was a huge relief, not only because he agreed with me that my plans were reasonable, but also that there was no suggestion from him that my situation was my fault and if I didn't grab *some job, any job* right away, I'd be making things worse for us.

Of course I need to cut some of my expenses until I see how well I can do as without a regular job. One of the things I brought up in a discussion with Scott was that I will have to reduce the number of books I buy. Scott agreed. As it happened, we went bookstore shopping the next weekend for my dad's birthday/Father's day present and while we were at the store, Scott pointed out Margaret Atwood's new novel. "I should wait till it comes out in paperback," I said sadly. "Oh no, you shouldn't have to wait!," said Scott, and then told me he wanted to buy it for me. Sweet Scott. Nevertheless I will have to get stronger in my resolution. The next day at work, I told Georgine what had happened and it turned out that she had a shopping story too. She and Joel had also been talking about how they should start economizing. Georgine momentarily forgot her resolution in one shop and started oohing and ah-hing at something. Joel sternly stated "I am not going to buy that for you!" I'm not trying to compare Scott's possibly impractical generosity with Joel's possibly practical frugality. What stands out for me, is that even though it had been only a few days since Georgine had

received a layoff notice (she still has two months of paychecks coming), and even though they have been earning approximately the same wages for more than 25 years, he easily and immediately switched into the role of the bread-earning husband in charge of the money. This is something Georgine had expressed as her deepest fear with respect to losing her job, that she would no longer have control over her own finances, that she would become dependant as her mother had been dependant upon her husband. Joel knows this. But he said it anyway.

I have a lot to be thankful for, Scott foremost. I am also thankful that I have a set of skills that makes it possible for me to contemplate going out on my own, and that I've kept up with the industry and that I can hope to continue a career in a field I love, despite being laid off. But I'm still scared as hell. And occasionally pretty angry. But primarily OK.

## © Pink Slip, 20 July 2003

[JG] Since writing that last piece, the date of my DNR demise has moved so close I can feel it. The abyss approaches. I still can't see if it's safe to dive in. But dive I will. I've decided not to go in to work on my last day (August 1). I'm going to hang out with my sister Julie since she'll be in Wisconsin for our brother Steve's wedding (August 2).

I've been busy, too busy to get very worried or dwell much. I designed business cards for "Union St. Graphic Design" (though I've already shortened it to "Union St. Design"), am investigating getting my own domain, have printed many copies of my resume, also printed letterhead and mailing labels. I've begun putting stuff together for a web page, and hope to get that up and running in early August. I want to be able to point folks to my on-line portfolio. I'm taking a course in running a business and have met with a financial manager to see if my plans make any sense. (He seemed to think so, and also seems to regard me as a hot client for himself. We'll see. Lots of good advice from him.) I've opened a business banking account, have been looking for someone to do bookkeeping for me one or two hours a week, and am reading about how to use QuickBooks Pro to keep track of things. Anyone know anything about how useful job tracking software is? There's a free one ("Project Timer") available for the Mac but I don't know anyone who uses

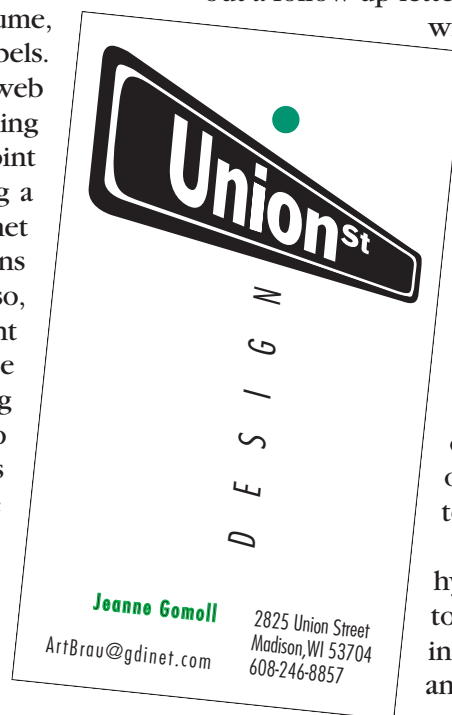
one. I'm replacing my Mac G3 with a new G5 and have ordered a Xanté 1200 printer, plus assorted pieces of software upgrades that I'll need for System 10, which the new G5 will have pre-installed. We will also have an airport hub that will allow both Scott and I to go on-line and print via radio waves. I haven't made the decision about whether to get a slide scanner right away or not. I may just wait till the first job comes up with lots of slides that need to be scanned. The prices can only go down on these machines. Whoo! Can't wait for the new, very hot G5! I still need to order a DSL connection. Must do that on Monday. There are three new books beside me that look like they will be very useful indeed: *2003 Artist's and Graphic Designer's Market*, *Business and Legal Forms for Graphic Designers*, and *Graphic Artists Guild Handbook: Pricing and Ethical Guidelines*. I've got to get a handle on my rates and marketing strategies! I think I'm going to join the Graphic Artists Guild. Looks like I can get good advice on business insurance and various legal matters there, plus it looks like a great place to network, get advice and graze for jobs.

I need to do some serious work examining the market here in town, and find out how much artists like me charge, what kind of work is plentiful, what kind is scarce, that sort of thing. I need to finish writing my business plan, but I figure I'll do that as part of my coursework in business class.

At the DNR, I need to follow up on the contract that's being written for out-sourcing graphic services. We artists have a lot of support from DNR staff; many of them are promising to direct jobs to us. And I need to send out a follow-up letter to my soon-to-be-former clients with a business card tucked in.

At home, I've got a LOT to do. Scott's brother has promised to come out to upgrade the electrical service in my office. And then I've got to move a bunch of stuff out of my office to make room for more critical job-related stuff in here. This will involve shelves moving from the basement to the attic and exiling my to-read shelf upstairs. I've already got 6 or 7 jobs that I will need to work on right away in August, so I need to get set up pretty quickly.

Ironic moments: My dental hygienist, who claims to be able to detect evidence of life stress in people's gums, looked at mine and said quite sincerely, "Wow, you



obviously have no stress in your life.” I said, “No, none at all,” not so sincerely. On the other hand, Scott and I went out for meal at Hong Kong Café the other day and my fortune cookie predicted a “change of jobs” in the near future.

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## © Pink Slip, 15 August 2003

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I’m writing this third and final installment of “Pink Slip” from the comfort of my home office. The axe fell on August 1, I went dancing (at my brother’s wedding) on August 2, and then went home on August 4 to face a chaotic situation: boxes lying all over my office floor. Boxes full of files, books, and portfolio materials that I used to keep in my DNR office, piles of papers stacked on every surface; it was a mess. So I went to work organizing. I moved fanzines and other files containing fannish work into boxes and onto shelves in the attic, moved the to-read books onto a bookshelf in our bedroom, and donated my bound copies of *Step-by-Step* to the Public Library. Then I filled the vacated file drawers and shelves with work-related files, books and supplies. It took me most of the week to get it all put away, although I did manage to get a bit of billable work done too, just the urgent jobs. Scott’s brother Jon visited and upgraded the electricity in my office. (What a guy! He had to work in the spider-infested crawl space under our house in order to put in the new wiring and he did it for free! I offered to take him out to any restaurant in town, but instead he suggested we order a pizza and rent a video. Pretty cheap repair bill!) I purchased the domain for unionstreetdesign.com, but I’m still having problems using it to receive or send email. That will get straightened out soon and then I’ll give you all a change-of-email address for me. I filed for my Federal EIN, arranged for a DSL connection (installation will happen next week, fingers crossed), and I’ll get my portfolio together this weekend, just in time to give a presentation on Thursday. My new printer arrived although I haven’t set it up yet. The legal forms book didn’t turn out to be as useful as I thought, mainly because the QuickBooks Pro software turned out to be so much *more* useful than I expected. It includes all the forms that I’ll need. I’d never have been able to figure out that program, though, if I wasn’t taking the Business Fundamentals course. That’s turned out really well for me because I REALLY needed to know about accounts receivable and payable and all that jazz. Ironically, it’s turning out that the thing I was most nervous about in terms of setting up a new business – the *business* part of it – is turning into a rather enjoyable new challenge. Learning all these new

terms, and ways of thinking reminds me of traveling to Mexico and finding it easier to learn Spanish than it had in the classroom, because the knowledge was so obviously and immediately *useful*. That’s the way I feel when I’m taking notes in business class these days. Almost everything that is covered by the lecture connects specifically to something I need to deal with in my business now. In fact, I’m going to sign up for the next class too, the one on writing a business plan, because it looks like that will be a really good way to do the necessary marketing research for myself and get professional help while I’m at it.

I only did about 12 billable hours this week, but that’s not because I don’t have enough jobs. I’ll do more billables next week. Whoosh!

I think that sort of gives you a sense of what it’s felt like for me these past couple weeks. I still have a two-page list of of things that really should be done soon. Nevertheless, I’m starting to feel more calm. I can already tell that I will like working at home, I’ve got a really nice comfortable office. Everything is organized. Certainly it’s nicer than any I’ve ever worked in at the DNR! I can play the radio if I like or turn it off and enjoy the quiet. I feel productive, and I really like the sense of control. Getting the financial stuff organized with QuickBooks Pro really made me feel more at ease, especially once I sent out a round of invoices! I’m sleeping better than I did in the last month when I tended to wake myself up several times a night urgent thoughts of thing that I needed to do. I dropped off a job for a client at the DNR today, and as I left the building I realized I was feeling quite OK about not working there. Now, if I can just manage to do well financially, it will all be perfect. I may not get rich at this, but I really do think I’ve got a good chance at succeeding.

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## © My Brother’s Wedding Invitation

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[JG] You can see the finished design for Steve and Linda’s wedding invitation is on the next page. It started out with a generic wedding couple silhouette (close to the graphic I printed in the last *Grayscale*), but gradually Steve and Linda asked for changes to make the couple look more like them until finally, the couple looks *exactly* like them. The Eiffel Tower is not actually printed; it is embossed on the actual card and looks very cool. (They fell in love in Paris; I wasn’t inserting a political comment, really. And Steve gave Linda a long-stemmed red rose when he proposed. That’s the symbolism.) I had one of the cards framed along with a silk rose as a wedding gift for them.

The actual wedding was a great party. My mom wasn't happy at all the fuss made for a second wedding, but the rest of us had a good time. I was ready to party for sure: Steve and Linda married on the day after my last day at the DNR.

### Ⓢ WisCon Retreat

[JG] We've been trying to plan one of these for a couple years now mostly because we never seem to have time to talk about long-term issues during regular WisCon meetings. This year we've finally gotten our plans together early enough to make this happen. Here are some of the topics that will probably get discussed over a two-day weekend:

- Ⓢ WisCon serves a niche market of the SF community, though each year our focus changes somewhat. Where are we heading? Where would we like to go? What is our focus? How should we balance various kinds of programming and activities? Feminist, political, fannish, serious, writers, etc.
- Ⓢ How do we envision WisCon carrying on as the key organizers grow older or move on?
- Ⓢ We seem to have been changing from a primarily locally-based conglom to an international committee. Is this shift OK, or should we try to go back? And if it's mostly OK, what do we need to do to make it work better? Some Madison people complain that all the "boring," "hard," or "uninteresting" jobs wind up being done by Madison people and the non-Madison folks get the "plums." Some non-Madison people complain that they feel like second-class citizens – the locals wind up making all the major decisions, leaving the outsiders truly outside. We need to include both local and non-local conglom members to keep WisCon going. We need to discuss job distribution, how work can best be coordinated with an international committee, recruiting, and the outsider/insider dilemma.



- Ⓢ Currently, far more people care about WisCon than volunteer to help make the convention happen. What strategies can we use to expand our volunteer base? What brings volunteers in and what barriers to volunteering can we remove or minimize?
- Ⓢ A lot of fund-raising goes on at WisCon. Its success is inspiring other groups to suggest fund-raising events for WisCon. Do we want to put limits on these activities? Set guidelines?
- Ⓢ Presuming that WisCon continues to make money, what long-term proposals would the WisCon conglom like to make to SF<sup>3</sup> about how it gets spent? (SF<sup>3</sup> is the Madison SF group's umbrella non-profit corporation that controls several activities, including WisCon.)
- Ⓢ Attendance numbers have risen each year for the past three years and we're at the point now where we will have to choose between moving to a larger hotel or figuring out ways to put a cap on our growth. What are our options?
- Ⓢ Early WisCon congloms wanted to make the kind of SF convention *we wanted* and if other folks wanted to join us, that was great. As it happened, many of us on the early WisCon conglom wanted a feminist SF convention, and it further turned out that there were a lot of people all over the world who shared that desire. Now the people working on the convention come from all over, and we talk frequently about WisCon being "for" a world-wide feminist SF community. Who is WisCon FOR?"
- Ⓢ The paperwork involved with processing membership refunds is so time-consuming and difficult that we have decided we need to take another look at what we are trying to accomplish with refunds. Currently we seem to want membership refunds to function both as rewards for work done as well as a form of financial assistance to low-income attendees. Can we separate these goals and create a different solution for each?

If you have suggestions about what needs to be talked about and would like to hear more about the Retreat, please send an email to me. We have only a few weeks before the Retreat happens but we would welcome input from everyone.

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## © Mailing Comments, *Intercourse* № 107

I'm going to try to do some mailing comments in the bit of time I have left till I have to send this off to Debbie. But I'm finding it difficult because my margin comments were written such a long (subjective) time ago. I'm having trouble remembering what I wanted to say. But here's a try—.

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## © Donya Hazard White

I love the image of you and your fellow Japanese students, all older than your teachers, and the pleasant, useful work you are doing together.

Whenever you talk about your house(s) in Palo Alto, the image that always comes to mind is my brother's home, when he lived there during his student days at Stanford. The street names you mention are all familiar. Rick also lived in the back of a house that had been converted to a duplex.

With regard to your comment to Jae, It turns out that the place we're holding the WisCon retreat—St. Benedict's Center—is a women's monastery and they regularly host retreats for women as well as mixed sex groups. Here's the website: <<http://www.sbcenter.org>>.

Wow! I'm so glad that my experience with the iron supplements turns out to have been useful to you. I saw my doctor last week for a regular check-up and she approved my self-diagnosis, although we're testing the iron levels in my blood, just to see if there's any problem. Hope it continues to work for you too.

Snow is not evil, not to me anyway. In fact it actually gets more and more romantic in my mind, the further into summer we get. At least that's the way it seems to me. I get irritated by snow only when it sticks around way past its welcome, and in these days of global warmed winters, that hasn't happened for a long time!

Great reviews! Thanks.

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## © Lyn Paleo

I miss you already, though I can well understand your decision to focus on your dissertation. I hope it turns out fabulously and that you come back here soon.

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## © Tom Whitmore

I'm intrigued by your personal growth game. I can think of a few people I'd love to try playing it with.

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## © Debbie Notkin

I can't find your comment about it in this zine, but I know I wanted to ask you what you disliked about Live Journal. I've been avoiding it for various vague and not well-examined reasons, and I'd like to hear what you think about it.

Interesting comments about how you felt about the planning for the Gathering and how the early planning was a steamroller by the time you heard about it. I think Jim Hudson described similar feelings. Certainly it was an unusual situation for Jim to be in since as an in-town concom member, he has almost always been involved in the ground-floor stage planning of WisCon's major events.

I don't think the criticism of Friday programming was at all aimed at you. WisCon has scheduled 26 years of Friday afternoon panels; it's a long-standing tradition, and it's received criticism every year for a variety of contradictory reasons. Folks who can't get to WisCon till Friday night or Saturday morning resent anything happening before they are able to arrive. Folks who get here on Thursday want more to happen on Friday. Locals have often resented the fact that since they're more readily available on Friday, they get stuck on Friday afternoon panels which are not as well-attended as prime-time programs. Friday afternoon panelists often get bummed out about the low turnout for their panels. Lots of folks assume that if we schedule them on Friday, that we think they are not "worthy" of prime time placement. With the Gathering, this is the first year we haven't had a huge number of complaints along these lines. But certainly none of that criticism began with the year you chaired programming and you really shouldn't take it any more personally than all the rest of us who have also run programming and scheduled Friday panels.

How do I make my booklist and mailing comments columns come out to the same length? I fool around with the width of the two layout sections in the master pages until they come out even. It took about 5 or 10 minutes to make that happen.

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## © Kerry Ellis

Impressive letters to your boss and co-workers! You were eminently clear and sensible. I hope the situation is much improved.

© Christina Lake

We should have planned this better, Christina. I too regret not getting to spend some time with you at Seacon. I wish we'd arranged ahead of time to have a meal together. \*sigh\*

Here's part of a con report I wrote for the Tiptree motherboard:

Tiptree made a great impression at Seacon I think. Lots of people wanted to talk about the award afterwards, including a few young girls who got enthused after the Tiptree panel and the feminist SF panel. (Which in spite of being scheduled when most folks went to dinner on Friday, was surprisingly well attended and turned out extremely well: Maureen Kincaid Speller moderated the panel beautifully with panelists Paul Kincaid, Janet Lafler and me.) The committee gushed to everyone involved about how happy they were about the Tiptree Award's presence here. The bake sale made more than £110 and the auction was more successful than past Seacon fan auctions. Ellen Klages was unrecognizable but very believable as a gypsy fortuneteller at the Sunday afternoon "End of the Pier Fair." Pat Murphy was absolute dynamite on her panels, and there were quite a few really interesting and excellent panels that were better attended than usual for Seacon literary programs. In short, the whole convention seemed energized by the Tiptree's presence, the excellent programming, and the unusual number of pros participating on programming. (Ken McLeod, Chris Priest, Mike Harrison, Jon Courtney Grimwood, Farah Mendelsohn, and Paul Kincaid were on some of the best panels I went to. Unfortunately, guest of honor Mary Gentle called the committee only a couple days before Seacon and told them she wouldn't be able to attend because of a deadline. People were shocked, except for those who knew Mary from past experience and said that it wasn't really all that surprising. My opinion is that there are very few acceptable excuses to back out of a goh invitation, and that a writing deadline isn't one of them. It's certainly not going to do her reputation any good and may well prevent her from getting future goh invitations.)

Mike Harrison was a really good sport, wearing the tiara through most of the weekend, and mentioning frequently how much he liked winning the Tiptree Award and how much he liked the eccentricities of the ceremony and process. He loved the textile cake, though he didn't share any of his chocolate. That of course is a mark against him, but he really got into the song (mostly by Ellen Klages) we sang. So that's OK. Here's the song:

*H - A - Double R - I - S - O - N  
Spells Harrison. Harrison  
wrote a book whose theme is gender bending,  
won the Tiptree for its plot and ending. H - A -  
Double R - I - S - O - N, you see! It's his name  
and now fame  
ever will be connected with  
Harrison, that's he!*

We all thought the tune (*Harrigan*) was a British one, but it turns out we were wrong. It's as American as *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, by Cohen. Nevertheless, the Brit audience seemed to enjoy it and enthusiastically joined in the choruses.

Paul Kincaid's interview of Mike was essentially a long and careful examination of one of the Tiptree winners, *Light* that illuminated the text and made the experience of reading it additionally powerful. Mike's a funny, very intelligent, and sweet guy. And he looks great in the tiara, like some sort of mythic king. He even gave me some advice to give to Kessel for wearing the tiara, a series of zen-like lessons...

I made my traditional bake sale dessert, a Swedish Pastry for the Tiptree Bake Sale, and it was officially certified as a Swedish dessert by several Swedish fans who were at first were skeptical that an American could manage such a thing.

We had a good time. We would have liked to have stayed longer than just a week, but we had to hurry back to Madison because WisCon loomed.



You write that "*a permanent job must be close on a defunct concept (outside of the British civil service).*" It used to be a familiar concept in US civil service too. Frequently the reason people stayed with civil service jobs is because of the security and retirement benefits, even if they knew they could probably get a higher salary in the private sector. This has a lot to do with why I worked for 23+ years at the DNR—that and the fact that I like what the DNR stands for. But the possibility of security and a lot of the traditional benefits are fast disappearing from civil service. The current administration is attempting to disable unions in public sector jobs. (No employees in the new Homeland Security Department are allowed to belong to unions.) The budget crisis is forcing unions to give up a lot of benefits and it is clear to most folks now that public sector employees are vulnerable to layoffs as they have never been before.... I saw a cartoon the other day in which the main character muses to herself: "You don't hear the word 'career' much anymore."



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### © Kimberly Appelcline

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I really sympathize with you and your difficult relationship with your mother. It seems that both of our moms have some big issues around gift-giving!

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### © Guy Thomas

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I sure hope that the draconian state cutbacks don't affect you too badly. There are some really horrible things being done in the name of fiscal responsibility these days. The right wing is obviously using budget problems as an excuse to axe all the programs it never wanted in the first place.

Congratulations on finding the lift you need. I'm looking at the photo trying to figure out how the hell it works, but I'll believe you and hope you are as pleased with it as you were with your old lift.

I'm so happy for you, that you've found Serena! Hope it's still going great!

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### © Karen Summerly

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I do wish you luck with your work with Deborah!

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### © Michael Sturza

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Well, obviously I'm feeling particularly sympathetic with your comments about your work situation. I hate how corporations are taking advantage of a bad economy that they themselves caused (and were allowed to cause by government agencies supposedly overseeing them), to force "give-backs" from unions and employees.

I've told your story to several friends about the Italian tourist who assumed that women smoking outside building were prostitutes. Funny!

Well, if Europeans think smoking is a personal freedom issue, it still feels like there's a contradiction between that attitude and their very passionate determination to prevent the U.S. from exporting genetically modified food into Europe.

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### © Lisa Hirsch

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Gosh, I wish I could take Matt and Ellen to dinner too in trade for help setting up my DSL line.... Could be a pretty expensive dinner if you count in the plane tickets!

It was fun reading the inside scoop on the AJJF convention. Once you've worked on a concom, I think you always find behind-the-scene accounts of other people's conventions fascinating in a sometimes grue-

some, sometimes compelling way. Scott and I found ourselves edging into an intense discussion among Linda (my brother Steve's new wife) and her bridesmaids about some problems that they'd had to deal with during the wedding. Scott and I suddenly looked at each other and laughed: it was a hotel liaison session! Well, it's good that the people who you are most concerned with, know who really did the work, but I'm sure it was frustrating hearing John take credit for your work. I assume that it is unlikely you'll be willing to work with him on a concom again!

Why will Donna "of course" be taking classes next year while she works on her dissertation?

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### © Jae Adams

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Welcome to Intercourse! Sorry for subjecting you to the same story about my work situation that I printed in *Turbo*.

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### © Elisabeth Fox

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Your comments to Doug about the word "bravery" started me thinking about how oddly this word seems to have been manipulated lately. The terrorists who killed themselves on 9/11 were cowards. The young woman soldier who was rescued from the Iraqi hospital, where it turns out that neither she nor her marine "rescuers" were in any danger, was a "hero." It seems that the administration and media are trying to change the word hero and bravery into mere endorsements of those who are on the "right" side.

The Gathering was a 3-hour long event that we staged in two large connected ballrooms on Friday afternoon of the con. Tables lined the walls at which activities were staged: horoscope-reading, Jae Adams' tattooing, beading, button-making, fashion make-overs, a Tiptree auction preview, spice baking and sampling, various games, book-making, collage-making, etc. Lots more tables were set up in the middle of the room so people could sit down with their friends and talk, drink tea, eat cookies and watch the crowd play and walk past. It was similar to the kind of fair I used to work on when I was in elementary school - a fund-raiser set up in the school cafeteria, all benefits to the library or something. In the case of WisCon's Gathering, profits went to Broad Universe and the Carl Brandon Society. It worked surprisingly well, especially considering the fact that we had never done anything like it before.

Interesting comments about *The Crimson Petal and the White*. I did like the way Sugar's understanding of the world and herself shifted as she changes

class, especially how she herself is so confused by it. I liked the fact that she was so confused at how easily her inner convictions turned out to have been based on class-based assumptions. But I liked even better how she nevertheless continued to work on trying to understand the world and herself.

I don't know how unbelievable it would have been for a protected, wealthy Victorian young woman to have so little knowledge of procreation that she would not understand that she was pregnant, and then afterward be able to deny it. It's an interesting question for a 19th c. historian.

That's all I have the energy for right now. See you next month!

—Jeanne