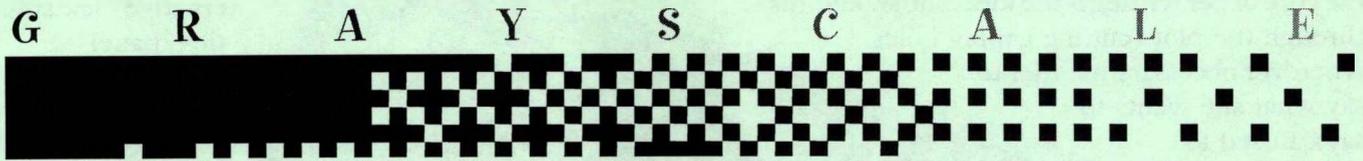


The illusion of gray created  
by an arrangement of  
alternating black and white dots



This is Grayscale #9, a zine for *Intercourse*, and an Obsessive Press Publication #206, from Jeanne Gomoll, 2825 Union Street, Madison Wisconsin 53704-5136. 608-246-8857. ArtBrau@globaldialog.com

4 June 1998

**W**isCon is over, but it still occupies my mind. I haven't seen the questionnaires filled out by WisCon attendees yet, but from all other reports, WisCon 22 was a great success. The weather was glorious, foiling the gloomy predictions of local meteorologists and hotel staff smiled happily at how we filled up their sleeping rooms. One very enthusiastic young woman told me that WisCon was the best convention in the whole world. Hoping to preserve the moment, I avoided asking her if she'd actually ever attended any other conventions. Someone else suggested that I bid to do the program book for the next AMA conference.

The main reason I keep coming back and working on WisCon, is that it is such a singular event. There is no other event that does what WisCon does and no other occasion that brings together the community that WisCon brings together. I think the feminist SF community really needs this event, and right now I doubt that any other convention would spring up in its place quickly if WisCon went away. I actually wish that another convention or two would compete with WisCon for its "niche."\* Premature extinction of the world's only feminist SF convention would seem less of a danger. These are the kinds of thoughts that drew me back to WisCon planning (in spite of my vow to stay out of it last year). Three months after planning for WisCon 22 had begun, no one had yet volunteered to do programming. Even though there were (and are) other things in my life I'd like to get busy on, I couldn't let this go. Scott offered to help and so we signed up for the duration.

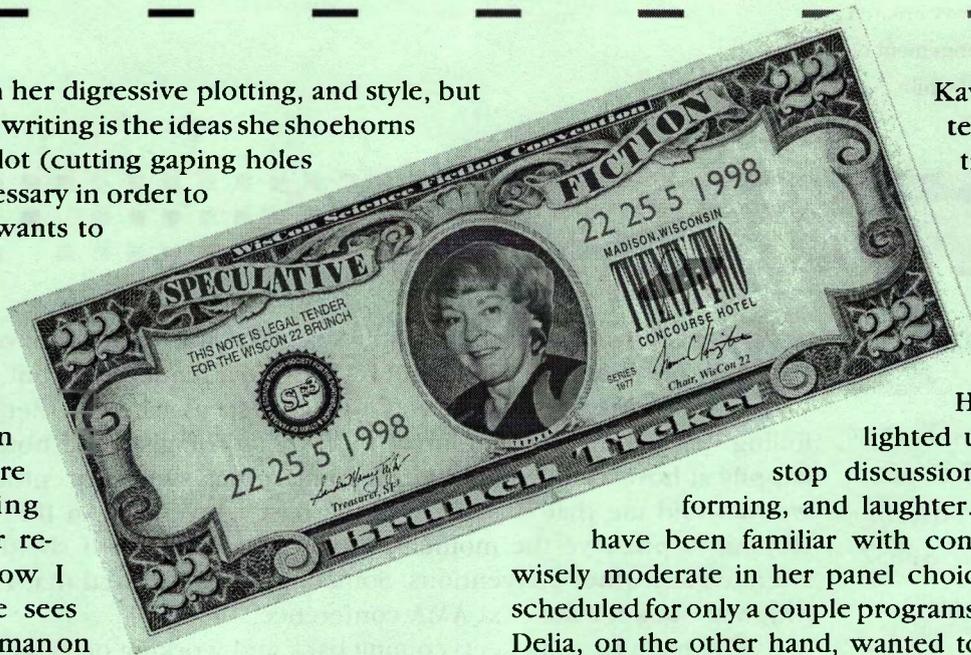
Having completed most of my work before the con in the planning stages, I was free to attend quite a few programs in between exciting interludes of trouble-shooting. Several people commented that I maintained a happy expression throughout the convention, and since it felt like I was "done" the moment the registration desk opened, I'm not surprised I looked like I was having a good time. It wasn't an act. After all, I had the imperturbable and ever-competent Spike Parsons running Program Ops. Everything that came up was handled. I had a great time and hope that those of you who were able to attend did too.

As expected Sheri Tepper was a delightful Guest of Honor, friendly and approachable. Unexpectedly she also turned out to be a very controversial guest too, with some heartfelt and radical opinions about what the human race must do if it is to survive the havoc that overpopulation is wrecking upon the world. Her early life experiences and work with the Planned Parenthood Association have given her a dark perspective on the future of humankind. Overpopulation, male violence, and ecological stress are not merely philosophical notions to her; they are deeply-felt personal issues for which she can see only drastic and harsh remedies. Her GoH speech was riveting, though I found myself disagreeing with her in my head about the personal freedoms she argued were expendable in the face of crisis. I also thought I detected an undercurrent of disillusionment in her speech, and imagined that she might have been deeply wounded sometime in her past. I wonder if she was once very optimistic about her own abilities and those of the people with whom she worked at Planned Parenthood and if—through personal experiences or simply an awareness of world events—she lost that optimism. I think anyone who has read Tepper's fiction can point to

\* See page 8

problems with her digressive plotting, and style, but the core of her writing is the ideas she shoehorns through the plot (cutting gaping holes wherever necessary in order to say what she wants to say). I used to think she needed a better editor or that she should have written her books more slowly, taking more time for re-writes, but now I also think she sees herself as a Woman on a Mission. It's my impression that she thinks it is of life-and-death importance that she get as many of her ideas out into the world as possible. (Which was quite a contrast to our *other* Guests of Honor, Delia Sherman and Ellen Kushner, who are excited about a new literary movement—the Young Trollopes—which rallies for character-driven fiction.) During her Guest of Honor speech, Tepper said that she believes that only feminist science fiction has a chance of effecting the change in world opinion and behaviors necessary to stave off disaster. And, you know, I've got a similarly high opinion of the world-changing potential for feminist fiction, but at the same time, I feel far away from Sheri in expectations that the literature can provide *the answer* to the world's problems. I am much more enthused about feminist SF's capability of offering really good questions, and a wide range of possibilities and/or roles for people who want to strike off on less frequently chosen paths. It's the people exploring and testing the new paths who will and do now offer us answers. In my mind, fiction can only illuminate the possibilities, not define the one right path. Illumination is an impressive enough contribution, though, I think.

Sheri Tepper has never before attended an SF convention, and says she never will attend any other except WisCon. So it seems we've got an exclusive. That will certainly make the signed first editions of her novels that we'll be bringing to Readercon's Tiptree auction all the more valuable. She says she had a good time, and I was glad that WisCon was able to give a platform to this influential, much-read writer. I will never forget the amazing image and unexpected discussion that resulted from seating Sheri next to Roz



Kaveney at the "Alternative Sexualities" panel.

Ellen Kushner and Delia Sherman—our other Guests of

Honor—delighted us all with non-

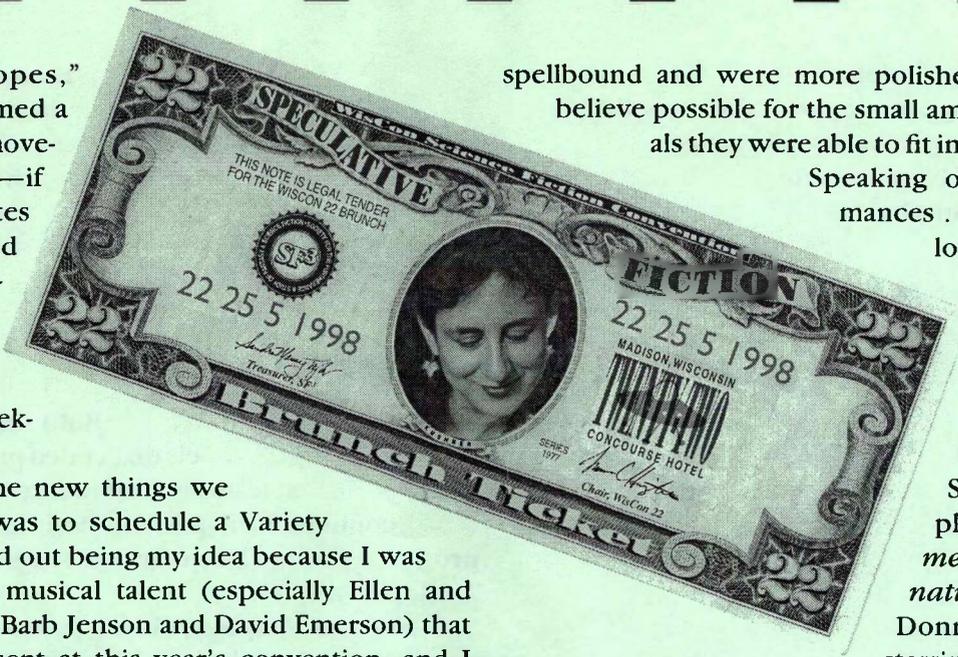
stop discussion, singing, per-

forming, and laughter. Sheri may not

have been familiar with cons, but she was wisely moderate in her panel choices, and so was scheduled for only a couple programs a day. Ellen and Delia, on the other hand, wanted to be on EVERYTHING. When Scott and I started working on the schedule, the first thing we did was to pencil in panels on which Ellen and/or Delia were to participate. We built the rest of the program around them. The one thing I was really unhappy about was that it turned out to be necessary to schedule a panel *about* Ellen and Delia's work ("The Double-Edged Sword," on which they were not participants) against their own reading. Ellen complained. I apologized. Indeed, I sympathized, it is awful to split up an audience that is the same for both events. I told her that if she wanted to move the reading I would advertise its change to whenever she and Delia wanted to move it. A little while later, Ellen came back to me with a sad face: "There isn't *anywhere* to move it!" And indeed there wasn't. Ellen or Delia or both were scheduled practically non-stop throughout the convention. (In addition, recordings of Ellen's radio show, *Sound and Spirit*, were playing during all daytime programming in a parlor up on the 6th floor.) So they came up with the brilliant idea (in one of those exciting trouble-shooting interludes) to *combine* the reading and "The Double-Edged Sword." We started the mutant panel a half hour early, during the lunch break. Still, they moved. They also sang beautiful ballads during the Saturday night Variety show. For their GoH presentation, they told a wildly funny story about the time they each wrote a similar story about the same idea, unbeknownst to each other. And then they read us the stories. Part of my laughter was from the recognition of how Scott and I tell stories to our friends about our lives in a way that is sometimes like a verbal duet. The rest of my laughter was in appreciation of Delia and Ellen's amazing wit and talent. Oh, and Ellen and Delia finally got to do their long-planned-for panel, "The

Young Trollopes,” which proclaimed a new literary movement, and may—if they get the notes transcribed and distributed—have created its own manifesto. What an amazing weekend!

One of the new things we did this year was to schedule a Variety Show. It started out being my idea because I was struck by the musical talent (especially Ellen and Delia, but also Barb Jenson and David Emerson) that would be present at this year’s convention, and I thought, hey, we should put on a show! But Barb Jenson and David Emerson did most of the work. I lined up Terry Garey to perform some of her wonderful poetry (I love Terry’s poetry) and cajoled Eileen Gunn to do some stand up comedy. Jim Frenkel was talking about doing a short play based on Delia Sherman’s short story, “Granny and the Feathery Bride,” so we added that to the playbill. It seemed that there might be time for one more act, and in the last couple weeks, we were delighted to learn that some of the cast from Minicon’s *Midwestside Story* were interested in coming down to Madison to reprise some songs from their wildly acclaimed revival of that classic, fannish, musical parody (directed at this year’s Minicon by Barb Jenson; orchestrated by David Emerson). So, we set aside the Madison Ballroom on Saturday night, asked the hotel to set up lots of chairs and round tables with candles on them, dimmed the lights and focused a spotlight on the stage, and *voilà* we had a Variety Show . . . ! Actually, it wasn’t that easy at all. I didn’t realize all the behind-the-scenes work that goes into such a production. WisCon is hugely in debt to Barb and David’s skills (not to mention their sound equipment), without which the show would not have been a success. If we ever do something like this again, we’re going to have to do much more preparation with the hotel staff (lessons on how to program the lights will be a high priority), and we will have to have someone work with the Variety Show as liaison. But the end product, though a half-hour late in starting, was a huge success. Ellen and Delia’s voices soared; Terry and Eileen convulsed us all in laughter, Barb and David sang beautifully and with amazing energy; the actors in “Granny” held us



spellbound and were more polished than I could believe possible for the small amount of rehearsals they were able to fit into the weekend.

Speaking of great performances . . . . Directly following the Guest of Honor speeches, WisCon audiences were treated to a performance of Susanna Sturgis’ play, *A Midsummer Night’s Alternative*, directed by Donna Simone and starring Pam Hodgson, Laurel Winter, Ariel

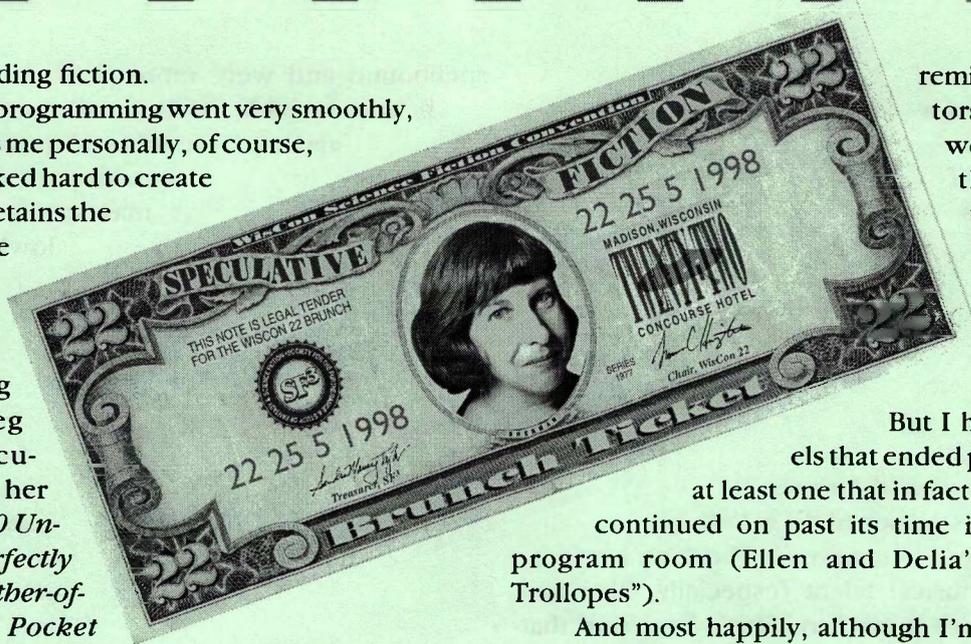
Franklin-Hudson, Tracy Benton, Bill Humphries, Alan Bostick, Scott Custis and Geri Balter. As with the Sherman play of the previous night, I was amazed that the volunteer actors were able to master their parts with so little time for rehearsing. (Rehearsals were scheduled—with difficulty—against ongoing programs earlier in the weekend.) But the result was hilarious and very well done. The play turned on the idea of what would have happened in Shakespeare’s story if the characters drugged with love potions saw persons of the same gender when they woke up.

When speaking of performances, I can’t leave out the Tiptree auction which was run by—or rather, starred—Ellen Klages, and drew people who didn’t want to miss the show but ended up emptying their pockets for the Tiptree Award. The Award raised a little over \$5,000 at this year’s WisCon (which included donations from Terry Garey’s and Laurel Winter’s boffo entertainment, the “Gaud Party,” Bakesale proceeds, and direct sales of Freddie Baer’s gorgeous Tiptree t-shirts, plus other items sold in the Art Show/Tiptree Display Room run by Jim Hudson and Scott Custis.) The auction itself raised over half of the total proceeds. The Tiptree Motherboard strives to find appropriate ways to spend the money, but it seems that donations continually outstrip all attempts. It’s amazing. We give big cash awards, plus prizes and travel expenses to the winners of the Award; we’re publishing an anthology of shortlisted fiction from the first 5 years of the award; we’ll soon hand out a Fairy Godmother Award to some struggling writer; and still we’re in the black! This alone makes it hard for anyone to say that there isn’t any real interest in feminist and/

or gender-bending fiction.

All-in-all, programming went very smoothly, which gratifies me personally, of course, since I've worked hard to create a system that retains the elements Steve Swartz fashioned for WisCon 20 programming and that Meg Hamel documented with her fine *WisCon 20 Unsurpassed Perfectly Organized Mother-of-all-Programs Pocket Program*. Last year we published the *Daughter-of-all-Programs*, and this year the *Granddaughter-of-all-Programs*. In future years—assuming we manage to complete program planning in time to continue publishing this pocket program using Meg's design—I hope to see *The Spinster-Aunt-of-the-Mother-of-all-Programs*, and *The Second-Cousin-Once-Removed-of-the-Mother-of-all-Programs*, or even, *The-Longtime-Companion-of-the-Mother-of-all-Programs*.

The thing I was most glad to have been able to do with programming this year was to get the final schedule done early enough so that we could send all panelists a list of their programs and fellow panelists, plus contact information, well before WisCon. We were able to send out letters (mostly via email, thank goodness) to everyone about three weeks before the convention, along with a directory of names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of other panelists. Many program participants told me that they were able to discuss some ideas beforehand with others on their panel and that this really improved the quality of the discussions. I heard the same thing from quite a few audience members who said they noticed a distinct improvement in the amount of preparation the panelists seemed to bring to the panels. Laurie Marks had written us a really useful letter which I forwarded to all program participants about how to make use of the full 75 minutes of WisCon programs, and I credit that letter with much of the improvement. Certainly there were exceptions. I heard of a few panels which spun off in directions completely uncharted by their program book descriptions. But I didn't hear from any panelists who felt stranded by the long panel lengths, as I did last year. This year I



reminded all moderators that they were welcome to close their panels whenever they felt their panels had ended, whether the 75 minutes was up or not.

But I heard of no panels that ended prematurely and at least one that in fact overflowed and continued on past its time in the overflow program room (Ellen and Delia's "The Young Trollopes").

And most happily, although I'm sure some did say this, no one told *me* that there was "too much programming." I heard that sentiment quite often at WisCon 20 and 21. I think we may have found the right number and right density of programming for the 550-600 person convention that WisCon was this year. All of the panels I attended were well attended. Some were standing-room-only, but none were sparsely attended. So, it seems we weren't spreading the audience too thin. Although everyone probably missed one or two panels that they would have liked to have seen, (and given the 5-6 program density in any given time slot, one could hardly *avoid* some hard choices), several people told me that the choices weren't nearly as impossible as they have been in the past two years. I am delighted to think that maybe we've found our happy medium. What do you think, those of you who were here?

The first program I attended was Suzy Charnas' and Mary Doria Russell's reading. What a great way to start off a convention, is all I can say! And I got to see quite a few more programs, including "Rushwash tea," which I'd been happily anticipating with visions of Ellen and Delia, Joan Vinge (who substituted for the ailing Katharine Kerr), Pat Murphy and Mary Russell speaking "in character" through their fictional counterparts. Not enough "in character" speaking, I thought, but still a really good panel. But I sure wish I'd managed to look into "Costuming for the real world, or: your leather jacket will find you." Freddie Baer and Ellen Kushner apparently directed people to garb that suited them. People streamed into the parties afterward wearing wonderful costumes that did indeed transform them and they all seemed to have had lots of fun. I'm really curious about what happened in the panel, "Humility garden: why do male authors stay

away from WisCon?" It was scheduled opposite a panel I was moderating (Who's responsible for that??!), and I haven't heard anything about it yet.

WisCon scheduled two programs on the subject of class, one of which was directly suggested by Dorothy Allison in the course of an online discussion. I attended Barb Jensen's panel on class, "Every move you make: the persuasiveness of class in the 'classless' American Society," which began its life as a lively political discussion in an apa. In spite of a very insistent audience that wanted to participate at every discussion point, the panel stayed focused and made some remarkable comments on the persuasiveness of class awareness, the wide disparity of definitions of American class structure, and personal testimony. Very good panel; and Barb is an extraordinary moderator. I tried to borrow some of her techniques for my own (also enjoyable) panel "Maintaining fringe societies," which began *its* life in a book discussion lead by Gerald Schoenherr many months ago. The panel talked about the fringe societies portrayed in Pat Murphy's *Nadya* and then went on to a discussion of how frequently fringe societies are portrayed in SF, but the discussion really got going when we argued about whether or not fringe societies were by nature ephemeral. The time zipped past and we never did get into the last points I'd planned to cover in the program. Other panels had their own origins in passionate discussions in other forums. "SF tropes: attractors or 'keep out' signs," for instance, was a standing-room only panel I always thought of as Timmi Du Champ's panel while it was in the planning stages, because it was her post to an online discussion group that generated a lengthy conversation which eventually led to the WisCon panel. I'm not sure whether so many subscribers recalled and were still interested in that panel idea, or whether the idea itself, honed by the online group, was intrinsically fascinating (probably it was both)—but that panel managed to attract the all-time record number of prospective panelists asking to join it: 42 people! No wonder the attendance swelled.

Many other panels were inspired directly or indirectly by online discussions, apa comments, book group discussions, and panels at other conventions. I mention the origin of these panels because it illumi-

nates something interesting about WisCon programming . . . .

I remember early WisCons—numbers 1 through 6—as having programs that mostly reflected the interests and subject matter of the Madison SF group's discussions during the previous year. Many were based entirely on what Jan Bogstad and I were reading, discussing and publishing for and in *Janus*. Other panels were actually rehearsed by the group as programs for the Madison SF group's meetings. The panel/game show, "Will the Real James Tiptree, Jr. Please Stand Up!", for instance, was performed first in one of these meetings and produced again at an early Wiscon. Things have changed since then, though. The local group is far less active in WisCon programming. Only a few people from the concom asked to join a panel and several stated that they felt they were "unqualified." Considering that several people joined panels this year that were unknown to anyone on the program committee, simply because they expressed interest, I had a hard time dealing with this response, but nonetheless, there it is. The sparks for most WisCon programs now originate outside the Madison group. In some ways this is a good thing. The topics are less likely to become stale since they are drawn from on-going discussions from a very wide variety of sources. And those sources keep the subject matter of Wiscon programs dynamic and on the cutting edge; WisCon truly feels like it reflects the interests and passions of an international community. On the other hand, I

worry about the growing disconnection of concom members from the program. WisCon still needs its local infrastructure.

But back to the conreport . . . . There was more than programming, of course, but that's the part of the convention I focused upon. There was the almost-around-the-clock consuite (run by Hope Kiefer, Pat Hario and Dan Dexter), and some great night-time parties up on the sixth floor in which Scott and I had far too much fun, far too late into the night. I'm really pleased by how our "experiment" at WisCon 20 has transformed into a WisCon institution. (The Hotel gives the convention all the 6th floor parlors for free and we in turn use the parlors for child care and programming during the day, and lend them each

## The WisCon 22 Unsurpassed Perfectly Organized

Granddaughter-of-the-  
Mother-of All-Programs

### Pocket Program

**WisCon**  
22

night to groups or individuals who want to throw open parties.) There was a tea party hosted by Janet Lafler and Karen Schaeffer which I regret having missed and a Tiptree Bakesale run by Julie Humphries that I was only able to visit for a moment. Oops, and I almost forgot the quirky Opening Ceremonies devised by Tom Becker that started WisCon off on a properly light-hearted note. Rebecca Holden, for the third year in a row, accepted papers for and ran a fascinating track of Academic programs. (I wish I hadn't missed Heather Whipple's paper, "Who wins Tiptree, what are they?: a look at Tiptree winners." I would like to read her paper someday, however, and hope we can persuade Heather to let us post it on the Tiptree web site.) Mary Pearlman ran (also for the third year in a row) the kids programming room, which was hopping and bubbling with laughter every time I passed by its door. With the kids room and the child care room right across the hall, WisCon has (since #20) finally gotten parent- and kid-friendly, as a feminist convention *should* be. Andy Hooper led a 4-mile walking tour of parts of eastside Madison on Saturday afternoon. Hank Luttrell ran the Dealers Room (for the 22nd year in a row!) and Jim Hudson and Scott Custis ran an entertaining and efficient Art Show/Tiptree Display Room. Scott, I think, feels like he is getting closer to managing the extremely profitable chaos that is the Tiptree auction. (This year, for instance, there were no mystery checks to puzzle over after the convention!) My t-shirt design seemed to be rather popular; I kept noticing the laser-toting space babe on royal blue shirts ("WisCon: Home of the Feminist Cabal") all over the con. And lastly (at least it's the last thing I can think to mention at the moment), the second annual Writers Workshop, managed by Amy Axt Hanson, was a huge success and attracted about 25 workshopppers and 5 professionals as critiquers. We're hoping to run it next year early on Friday afternoon to avoid the myriad number of conflicts that arise when it is put up against prime time programming. (Just imagine having to keep track of not only the panelist names, but also audience names in a multi-track program!)

Thank you, all of you who attended WisCon and continue to make it such an excellent convention, and thank you, also, those of you who volunteered to participate on programming, work in the Green Room, threw parties, performed, or volunteered in some

other capacity at the convention. You all did a marvelous job!

Mary Doria Russell has accepted our invitation to be Guest of Honor at WisCon 23 and the concom's post-mortum has been scheduled for the end of June. Tom Becker, WisCon 22's laid back and momentarily dapper and tuxedoed chair, says he will not be running for chair for next year. I've heard no rumors of anyone in the group talking about running for his position.

It's two days before the *Intercourse* deadline. Let's see if I can get some brief mailing comments written.

### Mailing Comments, N<sup>o</sup> 77

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© Debbie Notkin

**W**hoops, I didn't know you considered cooking a stress-relieving activity and might have been hoping to do some of it while you were visiting. Hope the chocolate expedition was an adequate substitute. I really appreciated the fly-in editing you did on the WisCon program descriptions and for the conversation and advice, too.

I think I too would have a hard time keeping a straight face if confronted with well-off relatives calling themselves "homeless refugees" simply because they temporarily did not own a house.

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© Bernie Philips

**W**ould you like to say anything about the panel you were on at WisCon, "Will the real savior please stand up?" I haven't heard any comments about how it went. Was it interesting; was it a panel where you could say some of the things about religion that you wanted to say?

Including the evocative names, "Hostile Hannah" and "Paranoid Polly" was really effective in your description of your work situation. I'm sorry you weren't able to get out of there, but I hope you felt a little better upon finding out that your boss really values your work and know that your co-workers' rudeness toward you is based upon their own fears and jealousy of your excellent work.

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© Kerry Ellis

**I** hope your decision to send Dean a birthday card (and possibly a note) didn't turn back the clock and make him think his relationship with you was



“on” again. If I were in your shoes, I think I would let future contacts with him be regulated strictly by chance, and not make any efforts to get in touch with him.

Thanks for including the summary of events at your workplace. What an exotic job site! Actors don't show up in this part of the country too often. Last year, however, Kinneau Reeves (sorry about the spelling) and Morgan Freeman were making a (a very bad) movie in Madison. I was daydreaming as I walked across the street—completely obviously—to the Capitol, which was the movie site chosen because it looks a lot like the Washington DC capitol, and I looked up, straight into Reeves' eyes. He said “Hi.” I said “Hi.” and kept walking as I considered the weird thing that had just happened. A few moments later I stopped, turned around to look where he'd gone and saw a great big crowd of people clustered around him trying to get his autograph.

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### © Donya Hazard White

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I care for Scott. I care for people I love. But I care about the environment and equal rights and the Tiptree Award. I care about issues and places and things. At least that's how I tend to use those phrases.

Becoming a mother (or even an active aunt) has never been one of my ambitions. But still I'm fascinated by the dilemmas, flashes of insight and rewards you and Jane, Jim, and Debbie describe. Thanks for writing about your experiences with Amber and Shaina.

You and I have know each other through friends for many years, and we've attended lots of conventions at the same time. I think we may have once gone to dinner together with a large group, but I don't think we've ever actually sat down to talk just the two of us. One of the things I was hoping to have a chance to do at WisCon this year, was try to do that with you, but I missed my chance again. Maybe Potlatch next year?

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### © Elizabeth Fox

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Office parks depress me when I compare them to downtown Madison as a work environment. Those of you who have attended WisCon know how nice it is on the Square, especially in the Spring. Well, I work the same distance from the Capitol building as the Concourse, only on the east side of the Square. Office parks impress me mostly for the wasteful way they gobble up prime farmland (and Dane County has some of the richest farmland in the

whole country) and plant it over with useless grass that is heavily dosed with fertilizer and weed killer which all ends up running off into the water table. Surface beauty/hidden poisons.

You write that “money doesn't mean love in my family, exactly, but it means love to me.” Does that mean you give money (or would like to give money, if you could afford it) to family members to show them you love them?

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### © Jane Hawkins

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Seeing a short minac zine from you didn't cause me any relief at all. I like your long zines, Jane. You still managed to pack some pretty wonderful stuff into those two pages, though, so it's OK. I'm glad to hear that Luke is all right and that you and Sam managed to find time for lessons about one another even during your migraine. I'm sorry to hear about Luke's Aunt Mary, and how hard this is hitting you and—I assume—Luke too. What a great thing you're doing by combining investments together with helping your dad and Barbara move to Seattle. The condo unit sounds ideal for retirement home for you and your friends. Hey maybe I'll finally move out to the Northwest and retire with you....

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### © Lisa Hirsh

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Congratulations on the new job and the golden handcuffs, etc. Hope the job proves to be interesting and your co-workers become good friends. But a 5-hour interview, yow! It sounds like you went about job hunting in an efficient way, good for you.

Your comments about the Catholic Church being ready for a schism sounds right on. If any other country were playing as fast and loose with church doctrine as the United States does, I bet it would have incurred far more pontifical wrath. My suspicion is that the U.S. is just too wealthy and provides too big a proportion of the Vatican's income for the Pope to threaten to kick out all the dioceses that essentially aren't teaching Roman Catholic doctrine anymore

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### © Jim Hudson

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Your comments on the balancing act between expression and suppression struck a chord with me. There are a few places in modern society that I'd like to see a little more suppression practiced and one of them is the U.S. military. There's

too much “let boys be boys” stuff going on in a top-down bureaucracy that requires soldiers to toe the line to all other codes of conduct—except, it appears—those that interfere with the so-called natural expression of hostility to women, lesbians and gays.

© Arthur Hlavaty

Catholics worship “bread in the delusion that it is God.” I laughed quite a long time at that one. Thanks. Have you always had the gift of being able to be succinctly witty, or have you had to work at it? Somehow it doesn’t seem likely that you spend a huge amount of time editing down your essays to sparkling one-liners, but who knows?

© Kimberly Cline

El Niño has treated us here in the Midwest just fine. We had the warmest winter I recall; it was certainly up there in the record books. We had biking weather every month of the winter which I’ve never experienced. Mountains were washing away out west and tornadoes ripped through towns down south, but we had a lovely winter. Spring has begun way early which meant that the lilacs had already bloomed and disappeared by WisCon (sorry about that). The only unwelcome effect I can complain about is that the mosquitoes also arrived early and their reproduction rate seems to have been spurred by the mild weather. But we’ll have luscious corn on the cob earlier and longer this summer, and so things balance out.

I am not the only one that has compared Princess Diana’s effect on people like that of a popular TV show. Peter Weir was interviewed on NPR’s *Morning Edition* this week. He was talking about the movie he directed, *The Truman Show*, and to make a point, he

made this comparison: “Take *The Diana Show*, for instance. People were really hooked on that soap opera!”

Your discomfort with the idea of swimming at the Berkeley Y because of embarrassment about your body hair reminded me of a similar (though reversed) situation I found myself in after I’d started losing hair due to Alopecia Areata (which means “spotty baldness.”) I wear a wig because of this condition which is really a pretty innocuous disease if you’ve got to have one since it has no lethal implications; it just means my hair falls out in big areas and it’s damned inconvenient. But anyway, I stayed away from swimming for quite a while because I couldn’t stand the thought of taking my wig off in the locker room. Well, I finally forced myself to do it anyway, and pretended it was the most natural thing in the world, and much more quickly than I ever expected, everyone in the locker room also acted like it was the most natural thing in the world. The worst thing is always imagining what it will be like; if you don’t act as if you are embarrassed, it’s doubtful that anyone will think twice about it.

© Pamela Dean Dyer-Bennet

I agree with you about how house-hunting can be lots of fun if one is not under the gun to find a place. Scott and I try to go to the open houses in our neighborhood, and we also like to go to the annual Parade of Homes for peeks at how wealthy Midwestern folks live. I’m fascinated by the trends in house layout design and how they reflect changes in culture and family structure.

Well, I’ll try to avoid orange paper from now on...

Jeanne Gomoll  
4 June 1998

\* *And who knows, I may get my wish soon. . . .*

The Floating Tiptree Ceremony Convention

Established conventions as well as groups who have never before thought of putting on a convention are encouraged by the Tiptree Motherboard to bid on the Floating Tiptree Ceremony convention. Your convention will need to be scheduled sometime after March 1 and before September 1 in any given year, but (just like the award itself does) it can break most other conventional convention conventions. You group will need to plan for the ceremony itself, of course, and for an auction and a track of programming supportive of gender-bending themes. But other than that, it’s up to your group. Your convention can be as elaborate or simple as you choose. The Award itself will pay for the Tiptree winner’s travel and hotel expenses which saves you from needing to raise money for a GoH if your con is going to be a “one-shot.” Don’t know anything about running a convention? Watch for Floating Tiptree Convention workshops at WisCon and other Tiptree-supporting conventions. Mailing lists and expertise will be shared. Consider running a bid party at Readercon this year, or at another Tiptree-supporting convention. The Motherboard will accept bids up to 5 years in the future.