



Union Street

A joint zine by Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis

catching up
TCPA 154

© Lisa Freitag

[JG] Congratulations on the email address. Has it changed your life?

As a teenager, I also read Leon Uris' *Exodus*, and some related books, including Uris' *Mila 18* and *QB VII*. Though I don't recall imagining that it would have been exciting to live in those times and fight those battles, I was strongly affected, as you were, by the heroism of the main characters in those stories that were always, of necessity, told by survivors. (Later, I saw the movie and felt re-inspired. When I felt in need of a strong dose of self-confidence, I would sometimes hum the title song to myself.) I think it must be human nature to internalize the points of view of the victors — or at least the survivors, rather than the losers and the dead. But the effect of such internalized identifications, over the long run, is that we tend to think of the vanquished and the dead as people other than ourselves. That's what makes those moments of honesty so disturbing. (I may not have been able to stand up against the Nazis; or, I would probably not have survived the holocaust.) We plainly recognize our potential selves among the forgotten or the reviled.

The question asked in many ways by several of us here in this apa is what we ourselves might have done if we had lived in Germany in the 1930s. And the only answer in my mind is that we will never know unless and until we are actually faced with the choice in our own lives. I don't think that the decision to act in a way that endangers our own survival can be accurately predicted from a safe perspective. I like to think

that there is a line, or a moral limit, beyond which I will not place my own survival over my duty to do the right thing. But I do not know. I have never had to make the choice between my own life and standing up for something I strongly believed.

Schindler's List examined the possibility of heroism in a more realistic way than I've ever experienced. It's not a romantic story; Oskar was not heroic according to any literary definition of heroism.

I saw the movie first. Actually I saw *Schindler's List* several times. And, as I've already mentioned to you, I read the book in one single, unstoppable gulp. It wasn't at all dull to me. I can't explain why I found the book so compelling, because I clearly recognize all the criticisms you expressed about Keneally's attention to minute detail and his failure to examine (or even speculate about) Schindler's motivations. The very fact that these (well-documented) events actually happened, that this person actually did what was portrayed in the movie, made me want to know more about him and more about the choices he made. But I think I would have been deeply suspicious if the author had pretended to understand what Oskar was thinking. I've come to believe that Schindler acted as he did, step-by-step, action following initially minor decision, followed by action, until he was enmeshed in a role he could no more cast aside than could an Auschwitz guard cast aside his role in the camp. It is significant, I think, that the mechanisms of a slowly heating bathtub may work both for the creation of great evil and great good. Small actions that seem insignificant in the greater scheme of things, eventually add up and force our large decisions and compel major life choices.

And so, while my teenage self wondered if I might be able to make that single dramatic choice, I find myself thinking now about whether I am making the correct *small* choices and wondering how the accumulation of my choices may affect me in the long run.

The fact that Oskar was such an unlikely, *human* hero made the possibility of heroism more believable to me — in both the film and the book, but actually more so in the book. Your criticism, Lisa, of the way Keneally

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describes Oskar's actions — so *“offhandedly and distractedly, as though almost by mistake,”* is exactly the way I think it may have been for Schindler, whose courage was not of the big action at the dramatic moment, but of long-term, stressful, day-to-day commitment to a course of action that became more and more personally dangerous.

I guess I can see why you have decided not to see the film, but I urge you to try it someday. I think Oskar Schindler's story can be read and viewed as an antidote to the idea that all or most of us would inevitably collaborate with evil. The idea that it is possible for an individual to stand up against great evil and to do something, no matter how small in the large scheme of things, is a positive, wonderful notion. Spielberg's film is both an amazing monument to something that needs not to be forgotten and to the possibility of hope, of the capacity for the survival of good in the midst of horror. Sort of a filmed Pandora's Box.... And besides that, you may find that Oskar's character seems quite a bit less opaque than it does in Keneally's book. It's not that Spielberg gives Liam Niesen a speech that reveals his inner motivations to us. But I think it's impossible for an actor to remain the cipher he is portrayed in the book. A good actor makes silences eloquent, and Niesen is definitely a good actor. We look into his eyes, we read his pain in his body language....

Ah, well that may not be the right way to convince you to see the film. I must say, though, that I am very glad that Spielberg made it.

© **Georgie Schnobrich**

[JG] I think the laughable situation in some U.S. states that are trying to legislate languages resembles the French Language Academy's attempt to legislate away vocabulary incursions from other cultures. That's not the way language works, guys. And your story about the parent castigating you for *“talking over the boy's head,”* seems equally ridiculous. How else does this kid's dad think the kid will learn new words, but to hear them in context and add them to his own vocabulary!? I was reminded of an email anecdote I've read several times now (and perhaps you have, too). It began its life, I think, as a testimonial on Dilbert's web page, and involved an employee's use of the word “pedology” (I think) in a memo that his boss misunderstood as referring to sexual abuse of children. He was apparently fired and was only saved by a middle manager who emailed the dictionary meaning to the boss, who in turn responded with a memo requiring all employees to restrict their memo vocabulary to words that could be found in the Sunday papers. The guy

then submitted his resignation in ransom note format: all the words were snipped from the Sunday paper. In your case, I bet that the boy's father was more embarrassed about his own uncertainty about the meaning of the word and used his son as an excuse to protect his own ignorance.

Well it does sound like your meeting style differs from many of your co-workers, but I say, don't edit it. I bet you're making the meetings more interesting to a few quiet ones, and who knows? Maybe, eventually, others will join you in some real discussions. I like your observation, though, that our work personas are influenced by the people skills we learn in fandom. The fluctuating and largely democratic hierarchies of fandom in which fans and pros meet one-on-one and whose friendships are based on personality and compatible ideas rather than compatible income levels, has influenced my attitude toward the far more arbitrary hierarchies in the work world. I used to be awestruck by my favorite professors, unable — even when invited — to use their first names in conversation. I don't think I'd have a problem with that anymore. I certainly don't have trouble speaking to upper management types as colleagues, which often makes me the point person when the other artists and I decide that we need to meet with one of those upper management types.

Excellent comments on the romanticization of violence. What we need is nationally televised tournament debates between smart, every-day people. Let's romanticize intelligence and wit instead of coolness and capacity for mayhem. Or maybe we could put lots of money into funding for the arts (rather than trying to kill it all off because its not paying its way). Lets have local and national competitions for awards and scholarships and funding with the winners being stand-up comedians, singers, cooks, musicians, sculptors, programmers, painters, teachers, scientists, dancers, animators, storytellers, etc. We may not be able to dictate the role models kids choose, but lets at least let kids see the variety of role models we admire.

Your recollections of how difficult it is to be an American abroad confronting criticism of the U.S. that you in fact agreed with, but felt compelled to defend on some level, reminds me of similar feelings I've had when discussing abhorrent U.S. policy with foreigners. And it clarifies for me a bit, the reports out of Yugoslavia of anti-Milosevich factions defending their country's actions in the face of nearly universal world criticism. (My sympathy has nothing to do with my feeling that NATO bombing was wrong, or that we nevertheless are obligated to do something to help the Albanians. It has nothing to do with anything Milosevich did or did not do, but I had forgotten how I felt when facing

criticism of the U.S. even when I totally agreed with it....)

But of course it was your blazing red hair that marked you for a true Scot to tourists, don't you think?

I totally agree with you that the courses one takes in college (or actually any life experience) can never be judged to be relevant or not at the time one is taking the course or experiencing the event. I have found it amazing the way my interests and obsessions and random courses have all blended together and given me the experience and knowledge to be the person I am today, to work at the job I have today, and be involved in the activities I am today. When asked by college-aged kids what I recommend they take in school, I always suggest that they sign up for whatever interests them and follow those interests as far and for as long as they are still interested. Be open to following new interests, unexpected opportunities. Eventually, no matter how bizarre the mixture of disciplines and odd jobs and hobbies a person has chosen, things will tend to coalesce and an unlikely career will present itself. In contrast, a college career plotted out according to which courses and which discipline will result in the most job interviews or highest salary, will much less frequently end with less success. If, for instance, all one's fellow students sign up for the same degree because there are lots of jobs in the field, that field will probably be less open and less remunerative than hoped. And if the student needs to backtrack and try again, they won't have the benefit (not to mention the joy) of starting with or adding onto a set of skills that they enjoy for its own sake. Diversity, I agree, is the key. Which reminds me, have you read *Mooby* Jane smiley? Diversity is the theme of that book set in a Midwest university, and in much the same sense as we are talking about it here, only with a huge dollop of humor.

Ah, the tear-jerking *Cyrano*. I must have seen some less effective versions before we went to American Player's, because that was the first time I was so emotionally touched by that play. I'm glad to hear that Greg tears up in touching moments and that **Jim Brooks** has revealed the masculine secrets of the same. But I still wonder, is it mostly women who go to movies or novels or plays *in search of* tearful catharsis? I admit that I am sometimes in the mood for action adventure movies. (After a stressful day or week at work, Scott will ask me what kind of movie I'm in the mood for and I'll sometimes say just one word: "Boom!") But sometimes I am very much in the mood for a good tear-jerker — and by that I mean a well-done, well-acted movie that is also a tear-jerker, whose plot and characters is likely to elicit my identification and tearful sympathy, after which I expect to feel happy and

relieved and romantic.)

© Bill Humphries

[JG] I am glad to hear you like your new job but am largely clueless as to what you are actually doing in that job.

Can birds smell? Is there some other way they might notice signs of previous cat habitation in the cat box? If so, no wonder the bird failed to warm up to you; perhaps you frightened it to death.

You're absolutely right about the fact that I've in fact had many different jobs within the DNR. Lucky I wasn't doing an interview the day I wrote so pessimistically about the value of my long-time employment there.

I loved Vinge's *A Deepness in the Sky*. I look forward to discussing it when more people in the apa have finished it. (And I'll be curious to hear what **Julie Zachman** thinks about the ending of *Deepness* after she finishes *A Fire Upon the Deep*.) *Deepness* will inevitably land on the Hugo ballot next year and it well deserves a place there. I only regret that Suzy McKee Charnas' masterpiece, *The Conqueror's Child* will have to compete with Vinge's book. I'd like them *both* to win.

© Michael Rawdon

[JG] What a fine, meaty zine, Michael! Thanks for the story of your move. I found it a very enjoyable read! I'm glad things went so smoothly for you and that you found a place to live that you liked. However, I don't understand how you could pass up an apartment with "a great foreplay." (top of page 4) That's got to be rare feature in apartments! Tell us more about it!

As I said to **Bill Humphries** I was being a little too pessimistic about the drawbacks of a long-held job on a résumé. I'd read something the day I wrote that commented on how employers expected their hot prospects to have jumped from job to job (and thus gain a wide breadth of experience), and I didn't think about the fact that I've also had a wide variety of experiences in the course of my employment at the DNR. I am fully capable of describing my experiences here in a favorable light if I ever need to interview for something else. I was just being a little pessimistic that day.

Congratulations on the new Apple badge. I was admiring how the "look" of Apple style is present even in this peripheral example of Apple documents. I'd love to know more about how Apple designers function within the company so that everything that is printed has the Apple "look." Here at the DNR, we have no

power at all to suggest, much less control the style of printed products. Publications are created in the field and by many employees, none of whom necessarily go through the graphic artists. And those that do go through us may ask specifically for a unique look for their park's brochure, or their program's logo, or their bureau's web page. (On one hand that ends up with a mish mash of styles. On the other hand, my job is probably more fun than an Apple designer whose choices are strictly regulated.)

© **Vicki Rosenzweig**

[JG] I don't bring much of my private life to work with me. If that's what you mean by acting at work, I do it. Most people, I assume, must see me as a fairly private person and when they hear hints of what I do "outside," many people are surprised. And I've told my co-workers only the bare minimum of what's going on with my hip. I've only gotten questions lately, since I've had to use a cane. (Even then I sometimes make an obvious joke and mention the snow blower accident. People generally get the idea I'm not interested in talking about it if I do that.) But when I was referring to acting, I was referring to the way some people adopt a different personality at work — pretending to be less or more confident, pretending to care about things some of their co-workers talk about (like babies, fashion, right wing politics, etc.). In my experience, pretending has a really powerful proactive effect on my core self and I prefer to avoid acting to fit in better because I figure I'll eventually transmute into that shape for real.

© **Jae Adams**

[JG] I find that telling stories about people my audience doesn't know requires the telling of some dramatic bits of biography. But I'm enjoying your Eastercon reports even though I don't know many of the folks you mention in them. It may be that intros are more important in telling stories out loud.

I'm sorry to hear that you are experiencing such unpleasantness on line. Your writing can indeed be somewhat frustrating to the reader who is trying to figure out whether you are in favor or against a proposition that is being argued about in the apa, for example. But no one deserves to be pummeled for preferring to remain ambiguous on a topic since most topics, after all, have their ambiguous parts.

So Caroline Mullan is interested in attending WisCon some day. Interesting. We'll have to make sure we keep her on our mailing list.

© **Maureen Kincaid Speller**

[JG] It is better, in the long run, to leave an enterprise like BSFA in the hands of people eager to work on it, than to leave it in the hands of people you fear may let it go entirely. It seems to me that this was a good time for you to step back — tired, but still doing excellent work; irritated, but still on pleasant terms with the board. I hope you're feeling relieved and energized by having let go.

What a great birthday! The balloon trip sounds lovely and the party afterwards must have been lots of fun. What a guy that Paul is! And a DUFF winner too!

© **Tracy Benton**

I'm glad to hear that your move went smoothly. I hope to get a chance to see your new place soon.

As you know by now, it isn't my back that is causing the pain in my leg, but the fact that I seem to have lost all the cartilage in my hip in the course of a very quick 6-month period. The cause is osteoarthritis, but since nobody knows what causes that or why some people get it and other don't, or why it can affect only parts of a body, I don't know if I can actually say they understand the cause. But they do have a fix that works well. They can replace my hip with an artificial one, which is what I hope they do real soon now. I'm more than ready. I may even know the date of surgery by the time this zine gets published.

Your hints about the novel, *Anna and the King of Siam* interest me. I may have to check that out.

© **Mike Peterson**

[JG] Actually, I bet that proselytizing nurses successfully convert patients all the time. Fearing death as a result of a life threatening disease or injury is the perfect situation for a deathbed conversion.

Ah, the shirt comment hook.... I put all my pull-over shirts on arms-first (then head). I think I got into a habit of doing this because I tend not to take my glasses off while dressing, and I need to carefully enlarge the neck opening so as not to drag my glasses off my face. As for socks and shoes: Socks first and then shoes. I put on the shoes as I pick them up. No special order, except on some days when my leg hurts really badly and I delay putting socks and shoes on my left leg for as long as possible.

© **Tom Havighurst**

[JG] What a contrast you and **Bill Humphries** are

to one another. You are hesitant about learning the language of your fellow statisticians; Bill revels in learning the secret language of whatever tribe he joins. I can see the necessity for learning the secret languages, but I hope you never let go of the clarity with which you write about everyday life. It's a gift.

I really think you shouldn't worry about having Asperger's Syndrome. Think about people like the Other Laura. I'd be willing to bet that this syndrome applies much more clearly there. You do not lack in social skills, it seems to me, so much as you sometimes seem to lack confidence in yourself.

© Pat Hario

[JG] Wow! What a great account of a week in the life of a trivia player. While reading it, I thought about what a fascinating background it might provide for a story or a movie. (The question master of a trivia contest has just committed a horrible crime and is leading the trivia teams step-by-step, answer by answer, to an understanding of the truth. As one team — perhaps the winning team — gets closer to the complete answer they realize they are all in mortal danger....) In any case, I'm really looking forward to the next installment of your account.

Where today the TV shows point us toward their web pages, they used to point us toward library shelves. Did you object then that not all people have easy access to a library? It is, in fact, as easy as going to the library now for most people to access a web page. And in terms of accessing exactly the information that is summarized on a TV news show, it's an excellent way of distributing that information. After all, if everyone in Madison went to the library to borrow a book recommended at the end of a documentary, how many would actually be able to read it within a few days of the show? How many people are able to access the information when it is available on line? A lot more. In fact, the web reference is a lot more democratic than most of the assumptions embedded into televised documentaries or news shows.

But you're right. We don't all have access to ATM machines. But in this case, I think the TV stations know that the great majority of people who belong to the potential market for products sold by their sponsors DO use ATMs. Among that supremely important subgroup of the population (the only one TV station execs care about), the prevalence of ATM-users is probably close to the percentage of U.S. citizens who have access to televisions.

There still is a fish hatchery on Fish Hatchery Road. It's part of the DNR complex there.

I think there are only 8 or 9 cartoons I read now in the Sunday comics, mostly because the best ones ("Doonesbury," "Sally Forth," "Dilbert," "For Better or for Worse," and "Sylvia.") aren't carried by the only newspaper in town that does a Sunday paper, the *Wisconsin State Journal*. These days the only Sunday comics I read are "Prince Valiant," "Foxtrot," "Real Life Adventures," "Bizarro," "Funky Winkerbean," "I Need Help," "Yard Apes," and "Non Sequitur." But I don't miss Lynda Barry's strip anymore. She lost me at some point, long before *Isthmus* stopped carrying her. On the other hand, I am really getting to like "Boondocks," (published in the *Cap Times*) a strip set in suburbia from the point of view of some newcomers on the block, a black family from the inner city. I am reminded of the early days of "Doonesbury," for its radical point of view.

© Ruth Merril

[JG] Excellent concert-going rules. I'd add one about turning off beepers and cell phones.

© Cathy Gilligan

[JG] The clown doctor in *Patch Adams* was also an expert, wasn't he? (I didn't see it, but I got that impression from the previews.) In that case, I'd rather have an expert with a good sense of humor than an expert prick. I know I deal best with my own ailments with a fair dose of humor, and I wouldn't mind the compassion and attention of a doctor who knew me well enough to help me joke about the situation.

Good for you for preparing so well for your panels at WisCon. I didn't attend any of your panels, but I know everyone appreciates it when the panelists have things to say prepared in advance. One sure sign of a potential dud panel is when you hear one or more of the panelist claim they don't know why they were asked to be on the panel. I hope you had a good time on yours.

Yes, the HIV-resistant apes are probably going to go extinct before cure is found. I brought up the situation as a part of the discussion that **Michael Rawdon** started when he said we shouldn't be worried about species going extinct.

It seems as if most of the high quality SF that gets published these days is published as hard cover and or trade paperback. I bet there's more profit in trade paperbacks than regular paperbacks, since the publishers have different rules for returns (no ripping off the cover for the trade paperbacks). In fact, I rarely buy original paperbacks.

 © Steve Swartz

[JG] The thing that first struck me about the Raphael Carter story's winning the Tiptree was that it marked a year in which the idea was primary for the judges. Some years, writing quality has been more important than idea; other years quality and idea have been balanced. But this year, I think the judges were struck by what they saw as a mind-blowing idea. And that's interesting. (I really really like the way each year's panel revises the process and the goal.) I certainly do think "Congenital Agenesis" has an amazing idea. As you say, it's primarily about sex (rather than gender). But in my opinion, most of us make our assumptions about gender based upon initial assumptions about sex. I think, for instance, that it would drive most people a little bit crazy if parents refused to tell anyone what sex their child was. Most people would find themselves temporarily frozen, unable to speak or play with the baby, and suddenly realize how much their own so-called gender-free language and behavior directed at a child is actually quite gender specific language and behavior. So, Raphael's book was gender-bending to me because, the story made me think about imaginary people who were confused about that first level of assumptions that most of society takes for granted. And if the binary assumptions we make about people around us (female or male) are in fact imaginary, what would the first step toward recognizing a world where sexuality was a spectrum? I liked it and thought it was a good addition to the list of Tiptree winners.

 © Jane Kurtz

[JG] Welcome to the apa, Jane, and congratulations on your marriage!

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 © Cover

[JG] Very cool idea for a cover and an elegant production. Will you cash my checks with this card?

[SC] Great cover, Pat. I thought it was a neat idea for a *Turbo* cover, yes even though it was a PUN. Thanks.

 © Georgie Schnobrich

[JG] Your favorite *Turbo* square from #154 was in fact scanned from the original David Vereschagin version.

Yes, I have seen *Impromptu* and I found the scene with George Sand listening to Chopin very moving.

I guess I'm continuing to take **Nevenah's** comment hook too seriously, but my mind chafes against the warping of nouns into adjectives. By imposing qualitative aspects (that belong to adjectives) onto a noun we restrict the meaning of the word. I mean, there is good art and there is bad art. But most people really seem to want art to include the meaning, "good," which of course gives them the latitude to declare stuff they judge to be bad as "*not* art." Same for furniture; there's comfortable furniture and there is furniture designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. But it's all furniture. And if music is defined as requiring melody, then of course, it's easy to say that what sounds merely like atonal noise can be called "not music." It seems to me that our culture is all too willing to include qualitative value in the definition of nouns, which leads to such scary definitions as families that are not families because they do not include people of opposite sexes.

Yesterday evening, while reading your comment to **Scott** agreeing with him on shallow news shows, I remembered an ad for the local news I'd seen that morning while I was dressing. It was pretty hilarious, though I'm sure the director wasn't aiming for that effect. A woman was preparing breakfast in her kitchen for her two children while a TV on the counter was advertising a local TV news show. As the ad's volume drops into background noise, the mom talks to us about how much she appreciates the information she gets from the news show and how important it is in keeping her family informed and safe. The weather report map flashes on the screen as she makes a final comment about how the news show helps her prepare her family for the day. As she says that, we see her turn to the window over the sink which is covered by closed blinds. She lifts one panel and peeks through the tiny opening to the outside world. The visual statement seemed quite clear: This news show lets us take a tiny, brief peek at the world. It may not make any sense in context with any of our other peeks, but that's all the world we think you need to see.

 © Pat Hario

[JG] I sort of agree with you about the film, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It's not a bad movie, certainly it's a sumptuously gorgeous version, but it also has the feel of flimsy construction. However I don't think it's really the fault of this particular production that it compares badly to Branagh's *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, or *Much Ado About Nothing* I just think that *A Midsummer*

Night's Dream is one of the less interesting of Shakespeare's plays. There's no really compelling central story, after all. It's an ensemble romp with little substance. Other versions have had the same flimsy feeling to me. (The only exception I can think of is a public TV production with Diana Rigg as both Titania and the Duke's fiancée. In that version, the possibility that the mortals were dreaming the whole thing was highlighted by having all the fairy creatures played by the same actors that played the mortal characters.) But I think this most recent film does it pretty well: the flimsiness merely mirrors the emptiness at the center of the original play. I suspect that the stuff added about Bottom was to reinforce the bookending story of the play, and give it a little more substance.

I usually enjoy the way films based on stage plays are able to provide scenery that no playwright would ever have asked for in a stage production. When Shakespeare wrote "[Enter DON PEDRO, DON JOHN, CLAUDIO, BENEDICK, and BALTHASAR]" in the first act of *Much Ado About Nothing*, he certainly didn't envision these four guys riding hell bent down a country road toward center stage and leaping from their horses as they approach Beatrice's group. But, you know, if he'd been able to write the screenplay, I bet that's exactly what he would have done. That whole exuberant scene, from song to baths, in *Much Ado* is one of my favorite scenes in filmed Shakespeare and it's mostly constructed out of greatly expanded, dry stage directions. On the other hand, I'm with you all the way on the general yuckiness of the mud-wrestling scene between Helena and Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The font I used on #154's cover wasn't the one Ellen Franklin used in her zine. It's a font I could hardly resist buying; it's called Whimsey.

[SC] I liked *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a little better than you did, but I certainly agree with you that it is not the best version of Shakespeare that I have seen in the movies lately. I liked the mud wrestling scene, however. Does that come as a surprise to you?

I am looking forward to more on Trivia. I am curious how big fights, yelling and threats all become part of the fun.

© Lisa Frietag

[JG] It seems to me that meeting people's eyes was one of those things I learned to do when I went away to college and pretended to be a self confident, competent person. (The pretense caused an actual change in my personality. That may be one of the reasons I dislike costuming for myself; I find the effect

of pretense way too powerful in my behavior.) It actually didn't take very long to get used to meeting people's eyes, maybe because there are so many subtle rewards for doing so. Suddenly, in most situations, I found myself in control of situations. (The saying about the winner blinking last is pretty accurate.) Rather than making situations worse because people assumed I was being evasive and dishonest (which is the body language meaning of avoiding eye contact), everything changed: people assumed I knew what I was talking about and that I was being direct and honest with them. They were happier, they treated me better, and they were more comfortable with me — all of which is a fairly effective behavior modification reward. It's a pretty cool effect.

I hadn't noticed the strange absence of the word "boys" in the coverage of the Littleton shooting (or any of the other school shootings that have occurred over the past few years), until I read an editorial that Suzy Charnas recently posted on an electronic discussion list. (Though I notice that **Jim Frenkel** used the word "boys" instead of the more usual "kids" in his zine last month.) I'm sorry, but I've forgotten the name of the author of the editorial, but it really astounded me. He pointed out that if a gang of girls were ever to pack in guns to their school and start shooting, the media would immediately focus on the gender of the shooters as the most important element of the event. But as long as the shooters have all been boys, the term "kids" or "teenagers" is used over and over again. Why are we not talking about the fact that the "kids" who have been doing the shooting in school hallways have all been boys? This is a really, really important factor. There is something here that we should be thinking about. We should be focusing on boys' lives when we look for answers as to why this is happening. What expectations are put on boys that they turn so quickly to violence as an answer to stress and pain?

Ironically, the day after reading the editorial, I heard a guy on a radio talk show who *did* use the word "boys," and asked the rhetorical question, what is going on with *boys* in our culture? He quickly answered his own question. It has to do, apparently, with what the *girls* are doing to the boys. What else is a boy supposed to do, he asked, when he hears that women need men as much as fish need bicycles? Grab a gun and start shooting, I guess. The guy was convinced that feminists had upset the natural order of things which makes all women dependant upon men. The confusion, naturally, results in violence. I was flabbergasted.

[SC] Interesting comment to Ulrika about interpreting non-verbal communication.

Regarding your comment to **Jim Frenkel** about the Littleton shooting, I disagree with you about whether the discussion should go on in the apa. The only thing Littleton and the impeachment trial (or the O. J. Simpson trial for that matter) have in common is overblown and often silly coverage in the media. The impeachment of Clinton had relatively little real effect on anyone in the apa, I think, but the possible meanings behind school shootings may have a direct impact on the moms and dads with young children here.

I haven't come to any firm conclusions about what is going on with these shootings either, though I believe that looking at the shootings as a suburban white male phenomenon is a good place to start, rather than something that is wrong with ALL kids, say, or one opinion I read in the media that Littleton was caused by feminism. I also don't think the Littleton shooters killed themselves out of remorse. I think suicide was their plan from the beginning to escape facing the consequences of their murder spree (they probably learned from watching the experiences of other captured school killers on TV that life after the shoot-out would not be pleasant.)

© Tom Havighurst

[SC] Regarding your comment to **Mike** on Germany during the Holocaust, haven't we all tolerated genocide? It is not like it hasn't happened since WW II, there have been many examples of mass slaughter of civilians and even genocidal purges in the decades since the war. Mostly the media ignores such things and our government responds very timidly. Americans can't often be bothered to care (well maybe if the victims are European). But at least Americans haven't generally supported mass murder once they have become aware of it. I don't think the Germans were unusual in refusing to see what was happening during the Holocaust. I think they were unusual because they knew what was happening and they wholeheartedly supported it.

© Hope Kiefer & Karl Hailman

[JG] So how did you answer Forrest's question about what a motherfucking dick means?

What a scary thing it must be to be a parent of a young boy these days, not knowing if there are things in our culture, on TV, on video, in the ether, or even in drugs that may play a part in pushing boys toward violence. It seems to me that you can only do the best you can ... and keep guns out of the house. I recently heard about a disturbing study done with a large

number of very little kids. Some of them had been taught not to touch guns, and understood that if they found a gun that they were supposed to tell an adult about it. Other kids in the study group had had no special training about guns from their parents. The disturbing part of the study was that when they were given access to guns (in a room with a two-way mirror from which they could be secretly observed), there was no difference between the behavior of the two groups. (The only difference, and it was slight, was between boys and girls. More girls left the room to find an adult.) Most of the kids were attracted to the guns and immediately started playing with them, pointing them at one another, and pulling the trigger. Scott's brother, Jon, told us about this study. Jon is a gun collector and enthusiast. Jon also has three very young grandchildren. He was stunned by what he learned in this report and has locked up his guns so no kids can get to them. I hope his security is good enough.

[SC] Karl, you wrote to **Jim Frenkel**, "*You're right about libertarians, they assume rationality of citizens, which just isn't there. Actually Karl Marx had the same problem.*" I agree. Actually our own Founding Fathers had the same problem, too. Our own government fails to work as well as it should mostly because citizens do a poor job of paying attention and choosing their representatives. Maybe someone should come up with a system that works best by assuming that most of the citizens are stupid, distracted, cynical, unreliable and totally self-centered. Then maybe we'd finally have a system that worked.

Vijay Bowen

[SC] I am looking forward to reading some details about your trip (even if it isn't your Official Trip Report) here in *Turbo*, if you choose to tell us a bit. I understand you were a bit hit with the Brits, just as I expected.

© Andy Hooper, Toy Expert

[JG] I can't think that there is much doubt about the identity of this prospective assistant of yours, but I'll quietly await an actual announcement. I did check out your web site and can see that you have your work cut out for you if you have to post new articles every day. Wow. I'm really glad you've got the opportunity to write regularly for a living, and about stuff you enjoy too. Congratulations!

[SC] At this writing your mysterious local assistant has not revealed him(her)self. I am very curious.

Julie Zachman

[JG] Don't you believe in the Art of Lists? Or is that the Art of Liszt?

[SC] Congratulations on getting "*back on the horse.*" I think you were a big success at WisCon and I hope you continue performing.

Wow, powerful comment to **Jim Brooks**.

© Maryjean Trew

[JG] Welcome to the apa! And what an amazing glimpse at another world you are bringing to the apa. Thank you.

[SC] Welcome. Cool title graphics (even though you lost the original art). You did a very nice job introducing yourself and pulling all of us into Bangladesh. It all sounds fascinating and I know I am not alone in looking forward to the next installment of your adventures.

Clay Colwell

[SC] I enjoyed *Phantom Menace* as the sweetest of eye candy, but lets face it, the story left something to be desired. Actually the story wasn't so bad, but the dialog was frequently awful. I miss the witty banter between Han Solo and Princess Leia (Ben Hecht consulted on the script), as well as the other characters. Lucas should focus on what he does best and leave the writing to a writer.

© Diane Martin

[SC] Great pictures. Scanners are fun. You're right, you all do have the same taste in glasses. You suppose if one of you rebelled and got contacts that the rest of the family would stop recognizing them as a member of the clan?

© Jim Brooks

[JG] Wow, you've actually seen tornado chasers! I sometimes think that people who live on the West coast assume that we see tornadoes as often as they experience earthquakes. And tornado chasers are even more rare. But I am glad you were driving in the opposite direction.

[SC] Great zine. Many many wonderful comments.

In your comment to **Jae** on guys crying at the movies, do I have to remind you about the *Guy Code of Honor* that specifically prohibits members from revealing our secrets? I know you warned us not to read that part, but I felt it was my duty to check it out. And what did

I find? Blatant flouting of the rules. You know that the official answer to any query about guys crying at movies is always, "Guys don't cry at the movies. Maybe a tear or two but that's all. Racking sobs are strictly forbidden and we never want to talk about it. Ever."

Loved your piece on driving by the Storm Chasers. I like watching the tornado specials filmed around these folks, but I have never thought how I would react to seeing them go by on the road when a big storm is brewing up. That would be a little unnerving.

I liked (or at least I have more respect for) *The Matrix* than you did. I think it is one of a small brave group of films (like *Twelve Monkeys*, *Dark City*, *Gattica*, and *Pi*) that are trying to introduce more ambitious SF ideas to a mass audience. *Matrix* wasn't a perfect film, or even as good as any of the other four I mentioned, but it was ambitious, it featured good performances and at its core was a scary and radical idea. Compare it with what normally passes for SF on the big screen (*Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Independence Day*, etc.). I rest my case.

© Jae Adams

[JG] The tension between fans and filthy pros has its parallel, I think at WisCon, in the relationship between new or infrequently unpublished authors and the very successful writers. I noticed a bit of tension among the writers respite group when it came to including writers they thought were a bit *too* successful.

If Ms. Manners publishes in the *Chicago Tribune*, maybe I can find her on line. That would be cool. I'll go look.... Well, if she is, she's not listed on line as a columnist, so I will need to look further. She just came out with a new book, I understand.

I own the Tufte book if you'd like to borrow it. I'll trade you custody for the Theresa Nielsen Haden book and the Willis compendium (*Warhoon28*). Let me know.

Ah, but if anything natural is the opposite of art, then what happens when we look at it (thinking: this is *not* art)? We're basically putting a mental frame around it, and making it into art. I don't think I can look at something without creating an artificial form and thus creating art. A new Heisenberg theorem.

[SC] Well, I enjoyed reading about your adventures at Eastercon. Thanks for writing about them. I still remember quite a few of the folks you mentioned. I hope you always feel that *Turbo* is a welcome venue for articles on your adventures anywhere.

[Jeanne's] WisCon 23...

...was wonderful. I think the thing that I am most enthusiastic about this year's convention is the discussions and programming catalyzed by the People of Color group in the Programming committee. At times I was reminded of the kind of activism that happened during the very early days of WisCon.

We got a bit of criticism during those first few WisCons for being un-fannish, too political, even too perverted. We persisted and surprised everyone, ourselves included, by how energized our audiences became when the discussion was opened to feminism. And through experimentation and the good fortune of doing WisCon with a committee supportive of feminist ideals, we ended up with a remarkable institution. WisCon is now a convention of international fame. We are the only feminist convention in the world and have grown far more prestigious than might be expected of a smallish regional convention. If it weren't for WisCon, I rather doubt that the Tiptree Award would exist at all, and I suspect that the fiction written might not include as much radical feminist content as it does today. It's been an exciting evolution from those early days of excited, hazy plans to the present.

I am hoping that WisCon fosters a similar horizon-opening process among the community of people interested in enlarging the scope of both convention programming and the literature of SF/F to include more diversity. Feminists of the 70s — both in the SF world and elsewhere — worked first to establish safe spaces, to discuss their common problems, brainstorm possible solutions, and just to get comfortable with one another, and gather strength. It may be that people of color, so long and so much under-represented in the world of SF/F, will also need similar time and space to consider options, to gather strength, and brainstorm. It seems to me that that's one of the important things that got started this year at WisCon 23. The two round-table lunch-forums, ("Welcoming People of Color into the Science Fiction World," and "People of Color Focus Group") catalyzed some amazing discussions and revealed a huge range of topics that might (I hope) eventually turn into thought-provoking WisCon programs. But we've just begun. Debbie Notkin and Nalo Hopkinson devoted a lot of time and energy searching out people who were both likely WisCon attendees, and activists of color, and urging them to come to Madison this year. Debbie, Nalo, Victor Raymond, Ian Hagemann, Mary Ann Mohanraj, and Celia Tan, developed some imaginative and exciting programs to instigate discussion among all the attendees of WisCon 23. Many of the new folks may

return to WisCon and many of them will make suggestions for changes and offer to volunteer. It's crucial, I think, that we follow up on this first baby step, that we listen to the suggestions, and that we work hard to figure out a way to communicate with these new folks and enable them to participate in the planning process. I know that the People of Color focus group developed a list of suggestions for WisCon next year and I'm looking forward to hearing more of it.

Speaking of tapping into out-of-town energy sources, what a great job Amy Hanson, Laurie Marks and Donna Simone did on the Writers Workshop and Writers' Respite programming! A few years ago, while we were planning WisCon 20, **Steve Swartz** received an email from someone asking if we would do a writers' workshop at WisCon. It seemed like a good idea, but the programming juggernaut got a little complicated that year, and the idea got away from us. I suspect that the same person contacted us again the next year, while we were planning WisCon 21. That year I chaired the programming department and I got a note from a woman from the Northwest named Amy Axt Hanson. Amy had been getting frustrated with writers groups she had belonged to in which some of the main criticisms leveled at her work was how much it would benefit from more ACTION. You know, starships, laser battles and *BOOMS*. Amy yearned for a more supportive atmosphere in which to discuss her writing, among people who liked the kind of SF that she preferred. It sure sounded like a WisCon idea to me, but I had no illusions that I could organize a writers' workshop myself, having never even been involved with one myself. So, I wrote back to Amy and asked her if she would like to organize it. She accepted my offer, and with the help of Laurie Marks, set it up fairly quickly. It was already pretty late in the planning year, but attending authors were very generous and many volunteered their time to read manuscripts and run individual sessions. Amy planned for five writers per pro, and despite the fact that she began advertising the workshop rather late in the planning year, there was an immediate and enthusiastic show of interest. I think about 25 people sent manuscripts to Amy. In fact the large number of people involved generated scheduling programming headaches for me, because so many of the writers were also program participants. (It's difficult enough to make sure that panelists are not cross-programmed against one another. Much as people would like us to do it we can't make sure that attendees' favorite panels are not programmed against one another, but that's basically what we had to do with the writers workshop "audience.") People really liked the workshops and this year Amy started working on it

earlier and we moved the whole workshop to Friday morning, scheduling it to end with a luncheon for all participants before the regular tracks of WisCon programming had begun. In spite of the fact that this move required participants to pay for an extra night at the hotel and increased other expenses, the workshops filled up all our available small and medium sized program rooms on Friday. (There were about 80 people who sent in manuscripts, plus 8 pros who ran the 8 sessions.) Amy asked me this year why I'd offered an "unknown" like her the responsibility of doing the workshop. Little did she know, that's how WisCon works.

The workshop this year was made even more successful by its companion programs, designed by Laurie Marks, which was called the Writers Respite. Smallish discussion groups were held in the 6th floor writer's lounge. Attendance was limited to the first 20 people who signed up for each of the individual sessions concerned with the stresses and joys of a writer's day-to-day business. I am wondering now if we will eventually see published writers crediting their experiences at the WisCon workshops and respite sessions with helping them achieve their goal.... Wouldn't that be cool? Amy lives in Tacoma, Washington; Laurie lives in Boston; and Donna Simone — whose troubleshooting, and non-stop, juggernaut style of organization energized both Amy's and Laurie's programs — hails from Cleveland, Ohio.

Our Green Room was beautifully hosted by first-time WisCon attendee Kerry Ellis from North Hollywood, California, and Terry Garey of Minneapolis. X-Madisonian and new mom, Rebecca Holden of Minneapolis wasn't able to attend WisCon this year, but organized our academic programs anyway. Scott depended upon out-of-towners, Victor Raymond and Jane Hawkins to run security with him. **Lisa Freitag**, of Minneapolis, functions as our Doctor-on-Call every year, and Elizabeth Bendtsen of Minneapolis resuscitated our film program. Jim Hudson and **Diane Martin** depend on a crew of out-of-towners to help them staff the Art Show. And let's not forget the amazing Ellen Klages, who entertains us at the annual WisCon Tip-tree auctions. Ellen, of course lives in San Francisco. It's hard to imagine WisCon managing to exist without the significant assistance we get from out-of-towners who consider WisCon an important part of their lives.

And one more comment about out-of-town volunteers, before I drop the subject. We couldn't have managed without Debbie Notkin (Berkeley, CA) and Jane Hawkins (Seattle, WA) working on programming. I was delighted to realize that my role this year really was to *help* Debbie run programming. Jane spent quite

a few sleepless nights working on the computer programming that made the *Unsurpassed Perfectly Organized Girl-Next-Door-to-the-Mother-of-All-Programs Pocket Program* possible once more (not to mention the name tents with the panelist information on the back and the nametag schedules and the room signs). I just laid that stuff out; that's the *easy* part, believe me. All three of us discovered, however, that there are a few glitches that need to be expected when one is trying to run programming from three different cities. Happily we ironed most of them out. The only noticeable evidence of slippage were a few typos in the pocket program. Debbie ran Program Ops out of the Green Room and kept the program running smoothly.

In general I love it when I feel like WisCon challenges assumptions and status quo. I'm glad we're getting beyond the "101 level" program on the subject of the role of People of Color in SF. That panel, "Racism and SF" that we scheduled several times in past years, reminds me a lot of that one, single "Women and SF" panel that used to stand alone for all feminist discussion in convention program schedules long ago. I'm also happy about what's happened to our discussions of class here at WisCon. Last year Barb Jensen's panel was explosive. One of the best of this year's panels was part 2 of that same panel, "Right, You're 'Middle Class.' Now What Does That Mean?" The Capital ballrooms may have been a little chilly for most of the weekend, but they heated up Sunday afternoon for that panel with Barb, Eleanor Arnason, Suzy McKee Charnas, Victor Raymond, Amy Thomson, and Terri Windling. Barb firmly grounded the discussion this year in real life anecdotes from panelists concerning their backgrounds, and how their perceived class affects their current sense of belonging and alienation. Barb and Terri discovered the similarity of their backgrounds in lower class America. They explored some of their alienated feelings on returning to the communities of their childhood. Barb was moving in her horrified discovery that her own success made her family members sometimes seem ashamed of themselves. Terri talked about having to learn a new language in order to fit into a higher economic class, but nevertheless feeling as if she is an outsider now wherever she goes. Amy Thomson, on the other hand, declared herself a representative of upper class America, and demonstrated that there is enough pain for everyone when it comes to dealing with the assumptions, institutions and language barriers between classes that aren't really supposed to exist in this country. Nothing exacerbates pain better than denying its very existence. Eleanor argued that many so called middle class people are allowing themselves to be

fooled or even blinded by the economic elite who benefit by the false hopes of the majority of people that they might eventually join the upper class. Victor and Suzy joined this discussion with some heartfelt and important contributions of their own, and all in all, this panel went deeper than any other panel on this subject I've ever seen has gone, and suggests the possibility for a whole lot more discussion. It was a panel that few of us in the audience quite wanted to end, but it was clear that the panelists themselves were completely rung out emotionally.

Another panel that I liked quite a lot was one that I moderated, "The Importance of Science Fiction and Fantasy to Radical Communities," with fellow panelists Ian Hagemann, Judith Little, Diantha Sprouse and Donna Simone. We covered a lot of material in a surprisingly organized fashion and the 75-minute period zoomed past.

Probably the thing I liked least about this year's WisCon was an argument that exploded within the WisCon committee only a few days before the convention started. In the hours after the meeting, I found myself speechless with anger, and for a while was *not* really looking forward to the convention. The concom argument had to do with one of the focus groups planned for People of Color, which was envisioned to be a completely safe space that could be used to brainstorm strategies for People of Color. The plan was to publicly schedule it as open to People of Color *only*, and in fact it was already listed that way in the published pocket program and on our web site. I had brought the plan to a concom meeting much earlier in the year to sound out reactions on the concom, but apparently the people that thought it was a good idea had no objections and the people who later objected didn't really hear me at the time. Debbie later said she had been surprised that objections had not been raised at an earlier meeting, but after my report was received with no comment, she began to expect some arguments at the convention. I expected that too. I remembered the women-only rooms at earlier WisCons and the Westercon where the first Room of One's Own (at an SF con) was invented. I remembered lots of guys being very angry and upset that there was a room from which they were barred. I figured we were going to have a similar learning experience at WisCon 23. Instead, Ben Schilling got pretty angry at the last WisCon meeting (four days before the convention began), and argued that a segregated program was "both illegal and immoral." He threatened to walk off the committee if we kept the program. Dick Russell supported Ben's reasoning. Most of the other people in the room scrambled to find a compromise, which

eventually materialized as a plan to ink out the references to "People of Color *only*" in the pocket program book. Wednesday night a few of us paged through the pocket program books and marked out the two references with black felt tips. I was upset that my earlier report had been ignored and that we were having this discussion in the committee so late. I was also angry that there was so much of a rush to appease the potential illegality of the exclusive focus group and no discussion at all about Ben's outrageous use of the word, "immoral." As it turned out, the Equal Opportunities Office in Madison did think we were treading on illegal grounds, and we did decide to obliterate the word, "only." But we did not eliminate the program and I hope that its attendees found it useful. I am not aware of anyone who did not self-identify as a person of color attended the focus group.

As it turned out, the break-out of controversy fed some interesting discussions both at the convention and afterward (on email). I don't believe that Ben participated in any of those discussions, however. Like the panel on class, I think there's a lot of buried anger and pain around this subject; there's a lot to explore. I hope that WisCon planners continue to make space for that exploration.

The thing that I had the most *fun* doing was Opening Ceremonies with Scott. A few weeks after the 1998 convention, after WisCon 22, Scott and I sat around our living room laughing hysterically over some of the responses to the surveys we include in registration packets and are filled out by attendees. As we read aloud some of our favorite responses to one another ("Kleenex could be softer," "The consuite needs more entrees," "I didn't volunteer because I'm selfish and rich."), we began to think about sharing the fun with everyone at the next year's opening ceremonies. Many of the comments worked really well read as responses to other comments, and so Scott and I developed a script made up of back-and-forth dialog. Morning people's comments contrasted against those written by Night people. Complimentary comments about the hotel were set against complaints about the elevators. Some people liked the programs that others hated.

J: *More panels on feminist spirituality*

S: *Get rid of that flaky "here's my goddess theory" thing*

Anyway, it was lots of fun to do. We got many laughs. And we were joined on stage by still MORE out-of-towners. Portland Oregon fan, David Levine demonstrated his acting skills in the recitation of two very funny poems to great acclaim. And Ellen Klages told a wonderful and funny story about how David Brin inadvertently convinced Connie Willis to join the Se-

cret Feminist Cabal. Ellen also opened the weekend's campaign to get people to vote for the talented Freddie Baer on the Hugo ballot (best fannish artist). Scott and I are pretty pleased by how Opening Ceremonies worked out, but it wouldn't have felt so much of a *whole* as it did, nor nearly as sophisticated without the jazz piano playing by **Julie Zachman**.

I haven't tried to do a chronological description of the convention and so I've left a lot out. I left out Mary Doria Russell's and Terri Windling's GoH speeches which were very different and both very effective. Terri Windling's was a marvelous, in-depth exploration of fantasy themes involving women and women's dreams. Mary Doria Russell's was an out-and-out performance, almost a stand-up comedy act based on personal biography. But I think it drew wild enthusiasm from us not so much because it was such an entertaining speech, but rather because of the heartfelt way in which she credited WisCon and the Tiptree Award for her success. It was a good thing to hear.

I have also left out the partying, and the conversations I had with friends who are, ironically, the heart and soul of any convention for me, but at the same time — the hardest thing to include in a con report. But I was very glad to be able to spend time with Debbie Notkin, Jane Hawkins, John Berry, Eileen Gunn, **Steve Swartz**, Karen Joy Fowler, Ellen Klages, Barb Jensen, Spike Parsons, and many others which I will be embarrassed to realize I should have listed here when I read this published report later. I left out the hugely successful Tiptree auction too. (We raised around \$7,000 this year from the auction, art room sales, t-shirts, Gaudy party, bake sale, and anthology sales.) I also left out the magical surprise of hearing Ellen Klages read some of her "child" stories. (Don't miss the opportunity to hear Ellen read these if you ever get the chance!)

WisCon 23 was a wonderful con.

[Scott's] WisCon 23

I think I had as much fun at WisCon 23 as I have ever had at a WisCon. Despite a rough start with the People of Color controversy, the weekend went pretty smoothly and most problems got worked out. WisCon drew 597 registrations of which around 550 actual bodies were in attendance. That is our largest attendance since WisCon 20.

I am starting to get nervous about the last WisCon meeting before the convention. We seem to have started a pattern of having relatively pleasant and peaceful meetings all year long until the very last one, were we break out into a big old-fashioned WisCon battle. Last year the at-con registration team, which hadn't met or discussed a

thing with each other all year, had a major fight at the last meeting over how packet stuffing was going to be organized. This year a major blowup occurred at the very last meeting over the use of space for a People of Color Only lounge as discriminatory, illegal and wrong. Even though this use of space had been part of the program plan for months.

Under pressure we worked out a plan that we hoped would address the more extreme objections. I took it upon myself to find out about possible illegality and it appeared that we may have been treading a fine line from a legal standpoint. But there was little time for reflection or calm rationality. In retrospect, we may have over-reacted, but to the best of my knowledge things worked out OK. We may be in for more discussion of this issue for future WisCons however.

The ironic thing for me was when, although I was very supportive of the People of Color lounge all along, I found out at the convention that I had personally put the kibosh on a similar proposal at WisCon 20 and I had completely forgotten about it. **Steve Swartz** reminded me that he had proposed a women-only space for a women's spirituality program he was planning but I had objected that making any space off limits to other convention attendees would be illegal. (Part of our objection to that space use had to do with the fact that the women's spirituality track used participants from the Madison community whose only interest in the con was that particular track of programming. They would not even have attended WisCon unless a con member had offered to pay their memberships for them.) While talking to Spike Parsons about the controversy, she reminded me that for several years she had run a women-only lounge out of her own sleeping room because the convention couldn't devote its space for such a purpose.

The biggest snafus at WisCon 23 were difficult things to avoid. Although we worked hard to get people who were running parties into sleeping rooms on the 6th floor next to their party suites, the hotel shot a hole in the plan by reassigning guests to different rooms at check in. When someone who needed to be on the 6th floor checked in and their room wasn't ready, the hotel staff automatically offered them a different room which they accepted. Eventually on Friday and Saturday, **Pat Hario** and I spent considerable time getting people moved back into the rooms they were supposed to be in so they could run their parties and we didn't get complaints from folks whose health necessitated that they be on another floor. The Concourse always learns from these experiences and next year I expect no problems sticking to our plan.

The other issue was more serious. Every year, per our contract, the hotel has a wedding reception on Saturday night in the Capital A/B ballrooms. Any year there is

a problem between wedding guests and WisCon members, it is always a problem started by (usually drunk) wedding guests with us. This year was the same story only worse.

I noticed dressed up wedding guests in the elevator as Jeanne and I were heading up to the sixth floor after the Tiptree Auction on Saturday night. In the past, I have tolerated wedding guests coming up to the floor to check out the scene; after all, they can hardly avoid seeing the party signs posted all over. They haven't before caused problems and I haven't received complaints about them. This time Jeanne and I just arrived at **Jim Frenkel's** fabulous TOR party when a friend started telling me about a nasty experience she had just had on the elevator.

She saw some drunken guys tearing down our signs outside the elevators downstairs. When she asked them if they really needed to do that, they responded by calling her a bitch, among other vile things. Just as she was finishing her story, I got a report that one of the (again) drunk wedding guys had just exposed himself to a woman running a party down the hall. Apparently she had stopped him at the door of her party room and asked to see his badge. He told her he'd show her his badge as he went on to unzip his pants. Fortunately several WisCon members were close by and chased these guys off the floor. I proceeded to summon hotel security and together we made a sweep of the parties and kicked any remaining wedding guests off the sixth floor.

In the future we will make sure the floor is completely secure from wandering wedding guests.

The only other real problem area for me was the AV equipment. I had very little call for AV stuff this year so I figured I could handle it myself with whatever help **Cathy Gilligan** could give me. I had an opaque projector that Cathy and her husband Greg kindly set up for me. I had a simple tape recorder, which I twice had to wrestle with to get to work (there was nothing wrong with the equipment, I just didn't know what I was doing) and a slide projector that had me so bamboozled that I had to relieve Dick Russell from the registration desk so he could get it to work for me. Fortunately Cathy handled the videotaping or I would have made a mess of that. I would really like an experienced AV person on staff next year. Even if there isn't much to do.

But overall, I had a lot of fun. We were told by many people who are in a position to know that WisCon is one of the best run SF conventions in the country. I think they are right. We have a fine hotel that loves our business, we have a very loyal audience of fans who we can count on to come back every year, we have a great location at a nice time of year, but we need more people to help make it all happen. WisCon will never end because our fans get bored with us, it will end only if the committee finally collapses.

Jeanne's Health

[JG] It's been hard to avoid questions of how I am doing lately. The cane and deep limp really gives away the fact that something's wrong. I occasionally quip that I'm getting over the effects of a snow blower accident, but now that I know more about what's going on with the pain in my leg, here are the true facts. I've developed a very aggressive case of Osteoarthritis in my left hip. (It is so aggressive that I lost all cartilage there within 6 months.) Unless I want to use strong pain-killing drugs and limp around forever, there is nothing much I can do except get a new hip. I've scheduled surgery for the installation of an artificial hip on July 30. I'll be in the hospital for 3-5 days and recuperating at home for at least 2 weeks more, during which time I won't be able to put any weight on my left leg. I should be completely recovered by at least the 5-week mark.

We are rescheduling some of our August events. I'm making lists of things that I need to do before surgery and stuff I'd like to get done while I recuperate (books to read, videos to watch, things to study, maybe a story to write). My sister Julie is going to stay with me for a while during my recuperation, and I'm looking forward to that quite a bit. (I plan on telling her I scheduled surgery at the best time for sweet corn at the farmers market.) Speaking of my famous sister...

The Other Bill and Julie



Julie was invited to a luncheon with the Mayor of Austin, the President, and 10 other folks. They were going to talk technology. Julie and Bill compared ping pong games, instead.

19 June 1999
Jeanne & Scott