



# Union Street

A joint zine by Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis



## © It's a miracle!! I can walk!

[JG] X-rays were taken on the 7-week anniversary of my hip replacement operation and I was officially given permission to stand and walk again on two feet, without crutches. I will be using one crutch for a couple days while I regain my balance and strength. Probably, I'll use a cane for a while after that, but boy, does it feel good to stop imitating a flamingo — no longer balancing or hopping on my right foot. Apparently everything has healed fine; the artificial hip (that looks stark and bright on the x-ray, like some kind of lethal weapon) is situated perfectly and all is well. The joint pain that drove me to such a drastic surgery is ... simply gone. I'm very glad I went through this, as—I am told—are most artificial-hip patients. Apparently, of all surgeries, this one has the highest rates of satisfaction reported by patients, and that sounds right to me. The relatively quick recovery time and the amazingly dramatic disappearance of pain are both good things.

## © Vicki Rosenzweig

[JG] Another meaning of the phrase, "the personal is political," and one that means a lot to me, is that personal choice and behavior can in themselves be political actions. That is, we change the world by example — by changing our own lives and the lives of our loved ones.

I wouldn't have wanted to forbid discussion about WisCon programming just because it came so late in the year. I just felt bad that interest in programming details had ebbed so low that most people on the concom didn't even recall having heard or read the earlier announcements and discussion about the People of Color track and the planned focus group meeting. It's not as if I had been inundating the committee with massive amounts of details about the program. For the most part, my reports to the concom consisted of brief comments about the stage Debbie Notkin, Jane Hawkins and I had reached in program development.

Applying standards of probability to a film like *Shakespeare in Love* may be slightly inappropriate. The story of this film is as fantastical a tale as *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, in my opinion. With ideas, props and phrases drawn from the 1990s, a plot line that weaves a magical tapestry of dramatic excerpts and dramatized inspiration, the whole of the construction is almost entirely artifice. In the same sense that all loose ends are tied up at the end of a Shakespeare play, so too do all the characters gravitate to the production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the end of this film. One character (Will's agent) even says, several times, "Things always turn out in the end," (or something like that). The world of *Shakespeare in Love* is not meant to be any kind of real world, but one in which the causes and effects of inspiration hold sway like natural law.

I totally agree with you that women should react with some skepticism when told that the women's movement has succeeded and that it is now time to work on the problem of men's victimization. This country has, after all, always

*"...had an aggressive affirmative action policy. Since the days of the Founding Fathers, the leaders of our government, our businesses, and our educational institutions have firmly believed that quotas and preferential hiring were the cornerstones of our system. As long*

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*as those getting the preferential treatment were the white guys."*

I just read Michael Moore's new book, *Adventures in a TV Nation*, and that's the source of the quotation above. Michael Moore continues, saying:

*"The white guys are whining about how they are now the 'new minority,' that it's the white man who has the hardest time finding a job even though he is the 'most qualified'... This is the common pout of the white man in America, and there's nothing more silly looking than a grown man pouting — especially when only 9 percent of the Senate is made up of women, blacks represent just over 5 percent of all journalists, and there are no African Americans on the board of directors of many of our largest companies."*

*Adventures in a TV Nation* is riotously funny, biting satirical and contains some very insightful, progressive politics. But the reason I bring it up now is for the chapter on the *TV Nation* segment called "Whiny White Guys." I missed seeing the show in which this segment was aired; I hope I get a chance to see it again. But it's probably hard to find, so I'm going to reprint its public service announcement below.




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## A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT • By Jay Martel

The White Man.  
He's everywhere.

Great white men include leaders, entrepreneurs, and artists.

For centuries the White Man has expanded his habitat to every corner of the earth. He's invented everything from the A-Bomb to the Zamboni. Surely this sparkling example of the human species will be with us forever, or will he?

Maybe, like the mighty buffalo, we have taken the White Man for granted. Already there are disturbing signs that the White Man as we know him is an endangered species.

The attack has taken its toll, everywhere you look the White Man is in decline. Ten years ago, 96 percent of the U.S. Senate was composed of white males. Today that figure has dwindled to a scant 89 percent! In the last few years the corporate boardrooms, the traditional habitat of white men, has undergone an

And I think you're right, too, that the heavily programmed WisCon is less a reflection of US/UK differences than it is about WisCon itself, and the tradition it shares with a few other U.S. cons at which programming is still considered a top priority. Potlatch and Readercon come to mind.

Sorry to hear about Andy's back. Your description of how difficult it was for him to get back home with you from the hospital made me glad that Scott and I own a car. When I left the hospital last month, it was a little awkward. I was rolled out to the parking garage in a wheelchair, and I pulled myself, lengthwise, into the back seat of our car, as prone as a person my height can be in a back seat. Then I braced myself for pothole bumps as Scott drove me home. The hardest part of the trip was getting up the 5 steps into our house once we got home. I'd practiced on stairs once with crutches at the hospital, but I wasn't very steady that first day home. Boy, I'm glad I didn't have to ride home on the bus!

Tell Andy I sympathize with him and hope he has some interesting things to read and/or watch during his recuperation. I sympathize with you too. It's not an easy thing to care for somebody for weeks at a time. Scott was great, but I know he felt like fleeing from the house to escape me a few times. Taking care of a person who can't bend down or carry things for themselves means that the caretaker has very little time of their own.

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unprecedented invasion by outsiders. Today the number of white males has plunged to merely 30 percent more than everyone else. Truly the White Male is being threatened on all sides by his natural enemies. Women. Minorities. And basically everyone who isn't a white male. He's fighting back the only way he knows how.

But he's tired and who knows how long he'll hold up without our help. While environmentalists demonstrate on behalf of the spotted owl and the snail darter there has been some reluctance to help the White Man.

Yet without the White Man we are all worse off. Who will bring us the A-bomb and Zambonis of tomorrow? Who will paint their faces at football games?

The White Man clearly needs our help. Support *TV Nation's* efforts to get the White Man recognized as an endangered species by sending your letters to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Remember: a White Man is a terrible thing to waste.

[SC] Thank you for keeping us updated on your MS treatment. I find this all very interesting, but I would feel odd asking you about it. I think it is very thoughtful of you to appreciate that we all care and want to keep informed.

Regarding your comment to Jeanne for issue #156 about figuring out ways to solve objections to convention program items before it is too late to solve or fix them. You made good suggestions, but I find it hard to make reasonable accommodations when people are informed and have access to controversial program items well in advance, but simply don't pay attention to them until the item shows up in the program book well past the last minute. I am all in favor of keeping the concomm informed about programming, particularly controversial stuff, but when people simply tune you out at meetings it makes communication tough.

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[JG] Good for you, going to the gym each day. I think it's great that Apple offers a well-equipped gym for its employees. I wish the DNR did, too.

[SC] Nice to get an update from you. You sound, well, busy.

You make shopping for your next car sound like a chore. I'd look forward to it if it was me going shopping. I haven't been in the car market for years and I have never shopped for a new car, but I think it would be great fun. The last couple cars we've owned, we bought from Jeanne's dad when he upgraded to a new car. He would sell us his old car for a very reasonable price, and he used to upgrade every few years. It looks like that source is coming to an end. Augie is retired now and doesn't go through cars as fast as he did when he was working. When he recently got a windfall payment from an error that was made in his pension, he decided to spend it on a new car (good man!) Unfortunately he is a like a kid when it comes to buying a new car and he just couldn't wait. He called me up while Jeanne was still in the hospital for her hip surgery and asked me if I was ready to buy his old car from him. He needed me to either buy the car right away or he would have to trade it in to get his new vehicle. I had to turn him down because I just couldn't deal with it at the time. I passed up a chance to upgrade to his old 1997 Taurus. Augie went for the big time and bought a new Lincoln Continental. It is a very lovely car. He has already let me drive it.

Since we passed up this latest car deal, we are stuck with a 1993 Sable with about 93,000 miles on it. We'll hold on to it for a bit longer, but I expect that we will be wanting to replace it in a few years. Maybe I will finally get to shop for a brand new car. If I do, I think I will take some time and look at lots of stuff before deciding. Our

cars have been fine for us, but who knows what we may decide on next. Needs and tastes change. I never used to consider owning a four door car, for example. But these days I am often elected to drive my dad or other members of my family as well as our friends from time to time and four doors are really convenient. I don't think I could have gotten Jeanne home from the hospital in a two door car. On the other hand, we'd like more room for packing gear than we have with our current car, but Jeanne is not interested in moving up to a truck or SUV. I am not fond of station wagons. So, we will see. Up until now, we have made do with whatever Jeanne's dad has been getting rid of. Next time, we will be trying to figure out what we really want.

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[JG] I enjoyed reading the update on your home repair work. Were you offered any options to replacing your old windows with anything other than new wooden-framed windows? As we've been replacing windows in our old (U.S.)/newish (U.K.) house, there's never been any question but that we would replace our wooden-framed windows with triple-paned, fiberglass frame windows. I wonder if this is the assumed choice because of the climate in our region that makes a tight air seal so important? Or is it a signifier of different architectural standards?

Speaking of different architectural standards.... Scaffolds seemed omnipresent to Scott and I when we visited England in 1987. Some days, as we walked around London, it seemed to us that *most* buildings were contained in a forest of scaffolding. One very seldom sees scaffolding here in the U.S. I think scaffolds are used inside buildings more often than out. And when you do see them outside, they're almost always erected against large, new, brick structures, for the initial laying of the bricks. Older structures are more often repaired by workers who are hoisted up inside truck pods that are electronically lifted up to the repair site on a long, collapsible, metal arm.

It seems reasonable that you're experiencing a desire to nest in and outside your newly fixed-up home. I always feel a touch of that nesting instinct myself, after I've done a major clean-up, or after making some significant improvement in the house. I want to hover around and enjoy it. I hope you enjoy the new bits of your home. On the other hand, *I'm* looking forward to your conreport here in *Turbo*.

[SC] Wonderful zine once again. I expect we will be throwing our annual New Years Party to which you and Paul are naturally invited. Consider this your first Millennium party invitation. We are a bit far off, perhaps, but

then how often does the calendar click over to the next Millennium? Do you think you can just put it off until the "next" time? Afraid of flying at the Y2K deadline? Come early and stay for a week or so. The airlines will be all safe by then. Bring warm clothes.

I am looking forward to all of the Australia trip reports that will be gradually coming to light in *Turbo*.

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© **Georgie Schnobrich**

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[JG] It's funny, my memory of the last week of July and all of August seems quite removed from the real world of weather and normal day-to-day life. Your recollection of the extremely hot weather reminded me of the folks I spoke to at the hospital who were complaining about the fierce temperatures outside. My sense of the weather then was much like my sense of Hurricane Floyd has been this last week — a sort of removed interest. It didn't affect me at all. But I'm impressed that you and Greg attended an APT double-header in the midst of that hottest week of the summer. What dedication!

The last time Scott and I went to APT, we saw *Lear*, and were able to attend a question-and-answer session afterward with Ariel Franklin-Hudson's Shakespeare group. Someone asked Lee Ernst a question about choreographing sword fights and Ernst borrowed my cane to better demonstrate an effective method for making a sword jab look realistic.

I know what you mean in your comment to **Carrie**, about feeling that "the category of leftist Extremist is now pressing at my elbow." The decimation of the Left has meant that the so-called "middle of the road" just keeps marching further and further to the right. Moderately radical stuff from the 60s (like the conversations in *Khatru*, the symposium on women and SF) might now seem wild-eyed, raving, radical left ideas. On the other hand, much of the so-called liberal point of view would have been called right-wing conservative ideas only a couple decades ago. \*sigh\*

You write, "*I fear that Anakin's mother was left behind to be tragic motivation....*" My impression after seeing the movie was that Anakin's mom will die in some horrible way just before Anakin is able to rescue her from slavery, and that her death will be partially the result of some Jedi decision. This will push Anakin to the dark side.

[SC] I don't know how you could manage two APT productions in one day, and such a hot day as well. One play always wears me out mentally and physically. Being so new to performances of Shakespeare's work, I find the plays rigorous to absorb the first time I see them. I love the

experience but I am always blown away by them too. I don't think I could make it through two in a day. I need a few days to recover and think it all through. I am even less familiar with Shaw's work. I am looking forward to seeing *You Never Can Tell* in early October.

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© **Michael Shannon**

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[JG] Well, I can see where speaking English would make it a little easier to drive in the U.S., but for the most part, the visual code of highway signage is enough for non-English readers to drive safely. The shapes, colors and international symbols of highway signs convey a lot of information. Of course, if it were truly a safety hazard to drive without English in the U.S. — other countries should enforce language requirements on their highways, as well. No American, then, should expect to be allowed to drive in any foreign country in which they weren't fluent in its language. I can imagine how well *that* would go over among jet-setting Americans!

[SC] To add to Jeanne's comment above about driving overseas, Wisconsin just finished negotiating a driver license reciprocity agreement with Germany. Now we can drive in Germany for six months with a valid Wisconsin license where before you had to take a long difficult written test, a one-hour road test, and pay five or six hundred dollars for a German license. Fortunately they don't require us to learn German. Should we require them to learn English?

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[JG] You asked whether any of us could think of a time-travel story in which Christ was rescued before his crucifixion. John Kessel's novel, *Corrupting Dr. Nice*, includes *several* rescued Christs — both a young and an older Christ who function in popular society like celebrities, much like Elvis would if he came back, reincarnated and bifurcated as two Elvises, the young and the old. *Corrupting Dr. Nice* is a fun novel involving an infinite number of time tracks that are "mined" for natural resources and cultures by the contemporary (future) culture. A huge tourist industry has grown out of the holiday destinations of "pocket times." People can go see Christ crucified, or watch dinosaurs roam, or can visit any number of historical attractions. The novel itself is basically written like a screwball comedy, much better (in my opinion) than Connie Willis' similar writing.

Interesting that William won't watch the Yul Brynner version of *The King and I*, but holds out for the

"real" animated version. Roger Ebert said in a recent *Siskel and Ebert* that as a child he thought animation had a more "real" feeling, too.

[SC] In your comment to **Hope** on blaming parents for kids' behavior, I don't see this as an either/or situation. When it comes to something like the Littleton shootings, there is plenty of blame to go around. Kids are often right about the poor treatment they received at the hands of their parents, even back in the 60s. And yes, kids who grow up to beat their wives often did learn their behavior from their parents. It is not right to hold kids blameless for violent behavior, but I don't think parents, the media, the community, and politicians can be automatically left off the hook either.

In your comment to **Clay** and **Michael**, I was very pleased to read about the part-time thing you have been doing with the private pediatric practice. I hope that is still working out for you. It sounded like they were treating you with some well deserved respect for a change.

### © Bill Humphries

[JG] Thanks for the flowers from you and Julie and the Friday night Brew pub group! They were quite exotic. The nurses would often ignore me and go right for the flowers, they were so cool. As an afterthought, they'd come over to me and take my pulse. Just joking, but the arrangement was incredible.

I also need to thank Julie for the birthday card, and hopefully will have already sent her an email by the time you read this in the apa. As she pointed out, she's not in "that" age group yet, but I'm glad she didn't resist sending me the card. I don't think I've ever received a card that seemed more tailor-made for me.

I hope there won't be any major crises at work for a while and that you'll be able to learn Java and the servlets at your new job. It sounds like you really needed to take that break. What a good day it turned out to be, though! Coastal Karma, indeed!

[SC] I just read that San Jose has the Worldcon bid for 2002. Does that mean you and Julie will be working on it?

### © Tracy Benton

[JG] Congratulations on the new job, Tracy! Hope you enjoy the roller coaster ride.

[SC] Congratulations on the new job. Great Labor Day party, thanks for hosting. Did Karen Babich ever show up?



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 © Nevenah Smith
 

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[JG] Sounds like you live in a great neighborhood with some good people. We hardly know anyone in our neighborhood and we've been living here for almost 10 years. That's probably mostly our fault, but it seems that there is much more of a cultural expectation to know your neighbors in New Orleans than there is here in Madison. There's a bit more stand-offishness, rooted in a mind-your-own-business rule that comes from respecting of privacy here. I think, in the long run, I prefer the assumptions of privacy over assumptions of intimacy. But that also means losing the opportunities for some interesting friendships. Is it a regional thing, do you think?

Thanks for the compliment about my pre-hip-operation organization. I think that burst of obsessive organization (or "Jeanne's going Virgo again," as Georgine, another DNR artist, calls it), had a lot more to do with fear than competence. I had to do something with those jitters, and by pretending to have all the details under control, it was easier to convince myself that I had the whole situation under control. I was certainly aware of why I was *really* making all those lists and cooking up a storm, but it felt better than the alternative (panic). And the lists and the frozen dinners DID come in handy.

[SC] What a fine zine. It is so good to hear from you. I liked the story about Mrs. Washington and life in your neighborhood. Sounds like you have some wonderful neighbors. Cut your hair? Cool. Yes, please, include pictures next time unless you are going to be in town sometime soon.

Regarding your comment to me, thank you.

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 © Julie Zachman
 

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[JG] Not only will we not know whether we will oppose evil until the moment comes for us, I fear that we will not know about our *chance* to oppose great evil until the moment is passed. I suspect that we all have and will have opportunities to resist evil or stand up for a good cause that we won't know are actually *crucial* moments until they are well passed.

I expect that **Jim Frenkel** will respond to your comments about Vernor Vinge's novels, *A Fire Upon the Deep* and *A Deepness in the Sky* if he gets the chance. I talked with Jim soon after I read *Deepness*, and he passed along some juicy gossip about Vernor's writing plans. Apparently he's talked for a long time about a many-volumed epic about Pham Nuwen. It's a sprawling story, covering thousands of years and

millions of light years, with several other novels yet to go. The plan is (if I remember correctly) that there will be a sequel to *Fire* first (we get to find out what happened to the Tynes!) and then a sequel to *Deepness*. I can't wait to see how one ship will manage to spark a revolution on the ziphead planet, and if Pham will then *goes the wrong* way into the heart of the galaxy.... The exciting thing is that if *Deepness* does as well as the Tor editors expect it to do, Vernor will be able to quit his day job at UCLA (?) and start writing full-time. That means, I hope, that the next book will come a lot sooner than *Deepness* did. I'm ready for it now!

[SC] It is a cool thing that you are teaching Forrest to play piano. I have heard that people who are good at math enjoy learning music.

And what a sweet thing you wrote about your nephew, Aaron, choosing you for a role model. Smart kid.

Regarding your comment to **Vicki** on Steve Swartz, I regret that Steve won't be responding to this whole discussion because I think his point of view would be at least interesting and thoughtful. Personally, I agree with the views you expressed, but I'd like to hold out the possibility that Steve was misunderstood. There may be things of value in what he believes. Unfortunately, he has dropped out of *Turbo*, probably to avoid this discussion. I don't feel sorry for him, but I do think the apa has lost out on an interesting thread of discussion.

In your comment to us you write, "*If evil so great as Nazi Germany ever exists in the US, it will have to take a very different form because our national personality isn't subject to the same tendencies.*" Maybe our *modern* national personality isn't, but America has no business looking too far down our noses at the Germans. Our treatment of Native Americans over much of the history of the nation is quite horrendous, for example. We didn't exterminate them by the millions in concentration camps in a few years, but we ruined and slaughtered them very slowly over the length of most of our national history. Even today, racially focused hate groups flourish across the country. They poke their noses out from under their rocks from time to time to remind us they are still out there waiting for the right moment. Hitler was little more than an extremist crank when he started out too. All it takes is the right conditions. A prolonged economic decline in the US could easily lead people to extremist "solutions." Look how easily parents are lured into believing that gay school teachers will somehow recruit their kids to the homosexual life-style. Americans are not exempt from hate and stupidity.

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 © Cathy Gilligan
 

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[JG] You and Dan Hatch have some interesting ideas about what's missing in fictional depictions of aliens in SF. But creating true aliens isn't always the *point* of science fiction with aliens in it. Authors often depict aliens as thinly disguised humans *on purpose*, in order to say things about us, here and now. One of the really cool things about SF in my opinion, is that it is possible, with a little subterfuge, to say some really interesting things about human beings, here and now, in such a way that the author doesn't automatically touch off people's reflexive prejudices and assumptions. The scenery is shifted to another place or another time. The "other" is changed from women or minorities to so-called aliens, and it's possible to spark some open-minded discussions about topics that too often get mired in the swamps of "We Always Do It This Way," or "It's Not My Fault." Even in television SF, where budget considerations probably restrict how alien aliens can be, aliens were nevertheless created as metaphors for contemporary situations and ideas. For instance the black and white alien on the old, *Star Trek*, wasn't supposed to be a weird alien; he was there so the story could discuss racism in an allegorical manner.

On the other hand, you and Dan do have a point; aliens don't often seem different enough from humans in fiction in which alienness is the point. I've got some counter suggestions for Dan's list of "bugs":

"Alien culture: Too many times it seems that alien cultures are depicted as if they were little mini-pockets of Earth cultures," writes Dan. Phylliss Gotlieb's *Flesh and Gold*, which just came out in trade paperback, contains an almost alarmingly diverse set of aliens and alien cultures. I don't think I've ever read the first few paragraphs of a novel so slowly or closely. And it took me till at least a third of the way through the book before I became comfortable with Gotlieb's astounding array of aliens and worlds, and I could resume reading at my normal speedy pace. This novel is a FEAST if you're looking for some unusual aliens and alien cultures. (I imagine I felt what non-science fiction readers must feel when they pick up an SF novel — almost overwhelmed by the new concepts and assumptions to be absorbed before getting to the story. But, being an SF reader, I actually like this sensation....)

"Alien communication." Dan asks, "Why not have aliens that communicate by changing color instead of verbal language?" Amy Thomson did exactly this a couple years ago in *The Color of Distance*. The (great!) aliens in the world of this novel communicate entirely

with hue and shape changes on their skin that they can control instantaneously. Hue communicates moods; shapes convey concepts. I loved this novel. Dan also suggested: "...how about having aliens that screech in high-pitched frequencies that our ears can hardly hear?" Didn't the Tyne do just that in Vernor Vinge's *A Fire Upon the Deep*?

"Alien emotions." Dan writes, "...a large part of our emotional reactions ... occur as a result of our acculturation. Let's see some aliens that exhibit different emotions..." I think the most alien emotional responses I've ever read in an SF story belong to Gwyneth Jones' aliens in the (first) Tiptree winner, *White Queen*. In spite of that, I disliked this novel BECAUSE her aliens were so alien. It's impossible not to notice how well written this novel is and how many important and amazing things she says in it, but it drove me crazy. One of the ideas Gwyneth works with is that if we ever meet non-terran creatures, they will be really, really alien. WE WON'T BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THEM. Her aliens' actions and emotional responses are logically consistent, but they are entirely incomprehensible, and the constant strain of not understanding why they were reacting the way they did just frustrated me. Another book that works with this idea is *Coelestis*, by Paul Parks, in which humans deal with incomprehensible aliens with ambiguous sexes, by giving them drugs so that they at least *look* more like human men and women. The main character falls in love with one of the "female" aliens and when the two of them are isolated from civilization (and the drugs), he goes crazy as "she" loses the characteristics that had marked her artificial sex.

For me, the closer an author gets to Dan Hatch's (and your?) ideal of portraying an alien that is so alien I cannot comprehend their motivations, the more likely it is that I will dislike the story. So, if I had been on that panel, "Why aren't SF aliens alien enough?," I would probably have been saying that they're alien enough already!

"Alien gestures/mannerisms... How about aliens that exhibit weird physical gestures," asks Dan. Since I just read it, I first thought of Gotlieb's *Flesh and Gold*. The image of the dignified dinosaur-like alien, who is something like a supreme court judge, reclining into her sleeping bowl and playing with the little pet reptile who prefers to perch on the top of her head — is certainly an uncommonly weird physical gesture. Ted Chiang's brilliant, "Story of your Life," (in *Starlight 2*, edited by Patrick Nielsen Hayden) also has some remarkable aliens. These aliens, called "heptipods" by humans, lack the concept of cause and effect, and are eventually able to communicate only with a human

woman, to whom they are able to teach their own, very inhuman sense of the world. In fact, the humans in the story never find out why the heptipods came to earth, what they wanted, or if they got what they wanted when they left. Because the aliens don't have mouths, or actually any sensory organs that humans recognize as such, the author comes up with some extremely creative ways of describing the way they "talk."

*"I heard a brief fluttering sound, and saw a puckered orifice at the top of its body vibrate; it was talking. ... Optimistic interpretation: the heptipod was confirming my utterances as correct, which implied compatibility between heptapod and human patterns of discourse. Pessimistic interpretation: it had a nagging cough."*

I actually liked this story very much, because the main character began to understand the heptipod's way of perceiving reality. The whole story is told in a distinctly nonlinear manner, that teaches us — by analogy — how the aliens might think of the story of their lives.

[SC] Regarding your comment to us about WisCon. I think that your decision to participate in programming to see if you can have an impact is the correct way to deal with what you perceive is wrong with WisCon. I encourage others who you feel are being left out to do the same. Keep in mind that programming is likely to be run by Debbie Notkin again this year and, since she doesn't live

in Madison, she may not be familiar with a lot of locals and non-pros. You will need to be sure you get your information in to her.

I was thinking about another convention I am familiar with that considers itself a reader-oriented con, namely Readercon in Massachusetts. They are quite different from WisCon. They have no political or social agenda like we have (feminist SF). They put on a con that they feel SF readers in general want, which is about access to pros. Unlike WisCon, they aggressively recruit pros to attend by giving away free memberships. They try to draw lots of editors too in hopes of creating a buzz that will bring in more writers. Their panels are almost all made up of writers and editors with just a few participants from the concom. They figure that the readers want to hear the writers talk about their work. They believe people don't want to listen to other "nobodies" like themselves talking about SF.

I don't share their values at all. I don't go to World Fantasy because I think it is nothing but a bunch of pros schmoozing by themselves, but WisCon is still nothing like that. We have been successful these last few years and that is translating into an energized crowd of attendees who are both pros and nonpros. But compared to so many other cons, I think WisCon still has a very high respect for average readers and fans.

*Jeanne Gomoll and Scott Custis  
19 September 1999*