



Union Street

A joint zine by Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis

Max

[SC] It is heartening to see that even though your story ends with your being laid off from your job, you could still end with, "life's good." It sounds like the skills you acquired and the self-confidence you gained from your old job will help you in your search for new and more exciting opportunities. I wish you the best of luck hunting for a new position and I hope you have a lovely time traveling.

[JG] Your employment seems to recapitulate the technology economy of past years. Great story. I hope your career as well as the tech industry recovers soon! (And that even if the tech industry flounders for a while more, I hope you soon find a job that makes use of the skills you developed in the last few years.) Britain's term for layoffs is redundancies; here it's reorganization. As state (of Wisconsin) workers, both Scott and I are more than a bit nervous about the possibility that we may be laid off as our new governor and legislature begins plans for major hacking (i.e., reorganization) of jobs to offset the state's horrendous deficit.

Jae Adams

[SC] We are sorry for your loss. Murder is such a terrible way to lose someone, especially someone so young. We are also following the story in the papers. The last I read, the investigation is continuing. No one has been arrested for her murder yet. My impression is that the police know who did it and are still gathering evidence.

[JG] The headlines are awful in themselves. Knowing the person behind the ink and generic crime report be far worse. Sympathies. How did Matt deal with the news of Lizzette's murder?

Georgie Schnobrich

[SC] **Greg** is a fine candidate for *Turbo*. Thank you for nominating him. At first I was surprised that you didn't just bring him on board with you via a joint membership, but Jeanne pointed out that with his own membership, he

OE Election & All That Jazz

[SC] I will be happy to second **Greg Rihn** as well as **Andy's** nominees Jack William Bell, Anita Rowland and Jane Hawkins.

I cast my 1/2 vote for **Hope Kiefer** to be our next OE. I have no special objection **Jerome's** candidacy, but Hope has been in the apa a long time and has had a chance to observe how all the prior OE's have managed things. She is also well acquainted with nearly all the members and lately she has been stepping back from other fannish commitments that could interfere with her ability to put the apa out every month. And as every past OE can attest, Hope has always been interested in how the apa operates.

Regarding your "What the Hell I'm Doing" section, Jae, I am still a bit confused by your rewriting of the rules page, but I don't really object so long as your successor (Jerome or Hope) feels free to take your version and modify it to suit themselves. I was particularly sorry to lose Andy's florid language of Items 11, 12, and 13 to your simple item H. I don't think item H is quite adequate as a replacement, but I will wait and see what the future OE thinks.

[JG] I cast my vote fraction for **Hope Kiefer**. If neither Hope nor **Jerome** have a clear majority after the publication of this apa, perhaps it would be a good idea to open up the election to email votes so that **Jae** can shed herself of OE duties as soon as possible.

And I second the nomination for Jane Hawkins and Greg Rihn.

Movies of 2002

What follows is the list of movies we saw in the theaters in 2002 along with Scott's and Jeanne's choices of the ten Scott liked the best (●=SC) and those that Jeanne (who dislikes limiting lists to 10) liked (◆=JG).

2002 Movies

1. *In The Bedroom*
2. *Mulholland Drive* [SC only]
3. *The Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring* (2nd)
4. *Gosford Park* ● ◆
5. *The Shipping News*
6. *Ocean's Eleven*
7. *Blackhawk Down* [SC only]
8. *The Endurance* ◆
9. *Monster's Ball* ● ◆
10. *Hart's War*
11. *Scotland, PA* (This is *MacBeth* set in a McDonalds. It's out on video now.)
12. *Ice Age* ◆
13. *Iris* ◆
14. *The Panic Room*
15. *Big Trouble*
16. *Kissing Jessica Stein*
17. *Changing Lanes* ● ◆
18. *Spider-Man*
19. *Star Wars Episode II—Attack of the Clones*
20. *Unfaithful*
21. *About a Boy*
22. *The Importance of Being Ernest*
23. *Minority Report* ◆
24. *Enigma* ◆
25. *13 Conversations About One Thing* ◆
26. *MIIB* (Men in Black II)
27. *The Road to Perdition* ◆
28. *K-19 The Widowmaker* ●
29. *Signs* ● ◆
30. *Bloodwork*
31. *Spy Kids 2*
32. *Possession*
33. *One Hour Photo*
34. *Red Dragon*
35. *Igby Goes Down*
36. *Spirited Away* ● ◆
37. *Bowling for Columbine* ● ◆
38. *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*
39. *Frida* ● ◆
40. *Far From Heaven* ● ◆
41. *007: Die Another Day*
42. *Star Trek: Nemesis*
43. *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* ● ◆
44. *Gangs of New York*

will get his own copy of the apa (Jeanne and I always have to photocopy the apa so we can both read it and make comments at the same time.) He will also get a full vote, though, according to **Jae**, hell will freeze over before he will actually need to use it. I'm not so sure.

I really liked your comprehensive holiday card options. I completely agree with your comments on holiday cards.

I haven't a suggestion for what cars other deities might drive, but I thought I would respond by quoting a few verses of Willy Porter's fine song "Jesus on the Grille" which seemed appropriate,

*i saw Jesus on the grille
of a southbound peterbilt
catching bugs between his teeth
glowing for everyone to see*

*he don't stop at those toll booths
the state troopers let him roll through
folks stop and stare at his long flowing hair
and his gold-capped tooth*

*i saw jesus on the grille
rolling down the interstate
and i know we won't be late, no darling
with the potentate of hauling freight*

[JG] Interesting Milwapa history. But in addition to the usual ebb and flow of apa energy, don't you think that Internet discussions have eroded (or distracted) most apas such that they may never recover? It seems to me that we will never again see the quantity of paper apas published in the decades before the Internet. The impulse to communicate on paper still fascinates some people, me among them, but there are so many other ways to communicate and stay in touch with friends now....

I'm sympathetic to your mother's stoicism around her asthma, which you described in response to **Vijay**, about possible reasons for hiding ones emotions. Displaying emotions, translates for me, into an invitation for comment, help, advice, etc. from those to whom I show my feelings. While I don't think anyone would say that I hide my feelings to an extraordinary degree, nevertheless, there are some things that I feel I can deal with much better if I don't have to ALSO deal with people's attentions. For example, being in physical pain, or dealing with fear about a necessary surgical procedure is something I much prefer to keep to myself. If I share such information, I do so only with people I know I can rely upon to respect the way I deal with those issues. My method is to distract myself from everything but the essential responsibilities, i.e., doing what's necessary for my health, keeping my doctor appointments, taking the meds, doing the physical therapy, etc. The more people who know what I am going through, the more I feel vulnerable to constant reminders of the very thing I am trying to (temporarily) ignore. A concerned family member or friend doesn't even need to say anything ("How are you *feeling*?"); all they have to do is look at me with unusual concern, and slam, I'm no longer enjoying the day or the book or the work. The curtain is whipped back and whatever fear had been draped in the back of my mind stands revealed in full, scary spotlight, and I have to work hard to again put things in proportion....

Of course there can be drawbacks in this sort of behavior. It can turn into an excuse to avoid going to the doctor, but as long as that's not happening, I feel that refusing to let fear grow and take over my life in this way works really well for me, better than letting everyone around me know what is going on.

Great holiday card, Georgie. I've been using the phrase "Happy Holidays" in my cards for decades now. Most years my mom makes some complaint about the non-religious flavor of my cards, but it would be incredibly hypocritical of me to send out the sort of card she sends out: usually a nativity scene decorated with halos and cherubim. This year she threw my card in the trash without first showing it to my dad, she was so disgusted (she said). Ah well, it's one of our little family rituals, I guess. I smuggled a copy to dad later. Dad laughed.

I agree with you that the difficult part of **Maureen's** request for a list of great Americans was the tricky word "great." I think I defined it for myself similarly to how you did. I looked for unusually important, positive contributions to American society. And I defined "positive contributions" as works and actions that created or strengthened American ideals that I personally admire.

☐ Gregory G.H. Rihn

[SC] Welcome. Thank you for the encouragement and wisdom about the future of *Turbo*. It was encouraging to see how many people wrote in to say they wanted *Turbo* apa to continue as it has.

As much as you may dislike intros, they can be very helpful. I knew a bit about your fannish background in general, but your intro helped fill in a number of interesting details. I have heard of Mythcon, for example, but I did not know that you were the chair. Were you mostly involved in Chicago Worldcons?

[JG] Welcome to the apa, Greg!

The Madison World Fantasy bid is headed by Meg Turville-Heitz. She approached many of us on the WisCon committee and got a few concom members to volunteer — Hank Luttrell, for sure (dealers room, of course), and I think Jim Hudson and Diane Martin may have offered some help. But not many of us. I got the impression from Dave Hartwell the last time I spoke to him that he's assuming that eventually Madison WFS will suck in the whole WisCon concom. I don't think that's going to happen. It will be interesting to see who does the work and how it turns out. Meg did a bit of work on a WisCon concom one year, but she's never run any convention that I know of. Perhaps she got involved in previous WFS productions. **Lisa**, did Meg Turville-Heitz work on the Minneapolis WFS?

☐ Velma J. deSelby Bowen

[JG] It sounds like you are feeling happy these days. I'm glad.

☐ Clay Colwell

[SC] In your piece on Giving Up, maybe it is not so much about a tendency to give up easily on everything as it is a difficulty sorting out what matters to you the most from the wide variety of things you are interested in. I also find it easy to get involved in all sorts of things I

Duds

Followed by the duds, movies Scott honestly didn't enjoy. Jeanne agrees with Scott's assessment of duds.

1. *In the Bedroom*
2. *Mulholland Drive*
3. *Star Wars Episode II-Attack of the Clones*
4. *MIIB* (Men in Black 2)

Jeanne's 2003 Book list

[JG} I managed to type up my list of books read in 2002, but not to annotate it. So I'll include that list next month. I hope.



am interested in only to find out later that I don't always enjoy doing everything. Sometimes I find that I like the idea of doing something, like cooking or working out, more than I actually enjoy doing it.

Regarding your comment to **Maureen** about the 10 Greatest Americans, I agree that the term "greatest" poses some problems. How do we define that, after all? Any lists offered inevitably will say more about the person offering them than they will say objectively about American history. But I think that is the point, it is an exercise in discovering something about each other and how we view America and history. Some lists will be heavy with political figures, others will value generals over scientists, explorers or pioneers over artists, still others will promote industrialists, etc. It is a big vague question aimed at eliciting a discussion about what matters most in our history.

[JG] Your reference to the NPR story about the Christian prison reminded me of a story that recently appeared in Madison newspapers about a Wisconsin state prison in Waupun. They have a spiritual counselor program there that rotates various clerics — priests, ministers, rabbis, Moslem clerics (mullahs?), and even a witch.... Well the administration finally decided to crack down on all these "fake religious representatives," (representing "fake" beliefs of Moslems and Wiccans) and to henceforth allow only "real" clerics, i.e., priests, ministers (and maybe rabbis too, though I'm not sure) to attend the inmates. I'm assuming this case will end up in the Wisconsin Supreme Court eventually.

Please ask for help with your depressions. It is reasonable to be scared about future episodes, and you need to check in with a psychiatrist to help you deal with it before you experience another. Ask friends to recommend a professional. Now is the time to do it.

I think you're being too hard on yourself for losing interest in some interests over the years. Every one of the things you feel guilt about "giving up" is potentially a project without an endpoint. All of them — macramé, careers paths of astronaut, priest, mathematician and video game developer — could take up a whole lifetime. And of course, since you only have one lifetime, you can't do all of them.... You've got to choose. Maybe it's a half-empty/half-full thing: you aren't giving up an interest so much as you are taking up a *new* interest. Reading a book to the end is something quite different. You know when you start the book that even if you dislike it, you won't have to devote your life to it. It's a task with a short timeline. I also tend to finish books once I've started them, even if I dislike them. Maybe, to combat the guilt you feel when you decide to turn away from an interest you need to create a sense of closure for yourself. Perhaps you could decide at the beginning of an involvement with a

new interest that you want to complete one or two (finitely defined) tasks for yourself. You could decide to learn one thing, to complete one project, and then later, if you decide not to assign yourself new tasks within that area of interest, you would not feel as if you had somehow failed or "given up," but might in fact feel proud of yourself for having completed something.

It seems that you and I frequently listen to the same NPR stories. I also heard that story about the poet who attached words to sheep and declared the random stanzas formed by the herds' movement to be art. It was a pretty funny article. I am willing to accept sheep stanzas as a kind of art. To me, one of the most significant steps in the creation of art is the act of *framing*. It might be suggested, for instance, that a photographer does little more than choose from among naturally-occurring random images (like sheep with words attached to them), which the photographer captures on film or in electronic data. But to me there is more to the act of framing: the act of seeing and framing (if only in one's mind) is an act of art-creation. I once drew a cartoon of an art museum in which people are gazing at pieces of artwork (all in their frames). One person is not looking at a framed oil painting, but instead at a framed window and does not seem to realize that it is not part of the art museum's collection. That person gazing at the bit of countryside enclosed by the window frame is an artist, framing the view and seeing the scene in terms of balance, color, form and texture.

More than 30 years ago I went to the movie *Doctor Zhivago* at a theater. I don't remember much about the film but I'll never forget what happened as we all left the theater. As the crowd filed through the lobby, everyone was talking about the breathtakingly beautiful Russian landscapes captured on film. I agreed with them all, but as we walked out of the theater, I noticed that the buildings across the street framed one of the most gorgeous sunsets I had ever seen. I stopped, shocked by the view in front of me and caused a minor pile-up of theater patrons behind me. But I think I was the only one who noticed the lovely view outside the movie theater. Everyone else kept talking about the snowy vistas, the cinematic splendor and ignored the real-life view right in front of them. If this same scene had been framed and projected onto the movie screen, I think everyone would have applauded the artist who captured it on film. But without the artist-provided frame they didn't seem to notice it.

If those word-toting sheep manage to get people to look around themselves at the beauty (and wordplay) in the world around them, the artist will have accomplished the task of showing people how to look for art in life and thus to create it themselves.

▣ Lee Murray

[SC] I was very amused by your story. It may be fiction, but it sure sounds like real life. Without making the mistake of taking sides in this incident, I have to say that “Nick” missed a lot more than sex by staying out. He missed out on a lot of drama.

[JG] I laughed at your account of the 4,000 poinsettias at Home Depot and the increasingly frantic attempts by Home Depot staff to get rid of them. I discovered in 2001 that poinsettias could be purchased at 75%-off sales a few days after Christmas, and took advantage of the situation to decorate the house with poinsettias for our New Year’s Eve Party. We did the same thing this year. We also tried to give some of pots of flowers away to our guests as they left in the wee morning hours of New Year’s Day. But so many of our friends own cats and were convinced that poinsettias were poisonous that we didn’t get rid of many plants. That’s OK. It’s rather nice to still have clumps of red and green flowers all over the house. I read (in the brochure that the greenhouse gave us with our plants), that the poisonous nature of poinsettias is a myth. Are they poisonous to cats but not humans? Does anyone know?

We haven’t enjoyed such risqué writing here in *Turbo* since Nevenah Smith submitted a tale of bondage. What fun. What does Dave think of your submitting this “fiction” to the apa?

Vicki Rosenzweig

[SC] Good luck with the novel and with your search for a “real” job. I noticed your recent job co-writing a history text, I always thought textbooks were written by college professors.

How was New Years in Quebec?

[JG] Your comment to **Velma** — (*“It’s not as if there is a fixed number of marriages that can be performed every year, and once they’re used up nobody can get married.”*) — reminded me of the old tradition that girls in a family must marry in birth order. The younger girls were supposed to wait for their older sisters to marry before they could become engaged. After all, a younger married sister automatically made the older unmarried sister into a spinster. Can’t have that! (I never read anything about whether the younger brothers had to wait on any sort of birth order.) I wonder if some of that old tradition still hangs on for some people, the notion that women of the same generation should marry in roughly the same time blocks, and wait for that stage to be over before beginning round-two? Silly in any case, but obviously it was taken seriously within families at one time.

▣ Tracy Benton

[SC] Thanks for the great pictures.

[JG] Thanks for sharing the costume photos with us! Very cool.

Good advice to future OEs. I also agree that the OE should be allowed a huge amount of latitude by us mere contributors. They should be able to fashion the apa process to best accommodate their lives.

I hope your brother has recovered and is feeling better. How is your sister-in-law? Was her melanoma stopped in time?

▣ Jerome Van Epps

[SC] Thanks for franking in that bastard **Tom**.

Regarding World Fantasy Con in Madison, I understand that Meg Turville-Heitz is organizing it. You should contact her if you are interested in helping, she is listed in the SF³ Directory. Jeanne and I are not involved. I don’t know what her plans are for the proceeds, but I will be very surprised to find out that she intends to donate them to a fan fund for local events.

Thanks for the Windy Con and Film Con reports. Jeanne and I have not been to a Windy Con since 1984. It sounds much the same as it was back then. Jeanne and I enjoyed Film Con much more than we expected, but if it continues to grow, Eric will need to organize more of a committee to get things done. He clearly needed help, but members were so young and upbeat that they didn’t really care if everything wasn’t done perfectly, but soon he will need to do a better job of getting his act together.

[JG] I don’t think the word “guest” should be re-defined (in terms of conventions) as simply a panelist. Calling someone a guest and not offering them perks as part of that invitation would be (in my opinion) like inviting a friend to visit and when they arrive, asking them what they’d brought for dinner and at which hotel they planned to sleep. A guest should at the very least be offered a free membership. Actually, I don’t even think that’s enough to advertise someone as being a guest of a convention. I would assume that a person’s travel expenses and/or hotel room were also paid for by a con that claims them as guest.

I don’t think the distribution of funds paid to the Madison World Fantasy Convention will be a matter of democratic decision by the Madison SF community. The way WFC Inc. works is that the disposition of funds is given over entirely to the local person who wins the bid, in Madison’s case, Meg Turville-Heitz. The WFC corporate advisors stipulate that some expenses must be made and oversee the general running of the convention. (For instance, in

previous years, they've required a minimum price set for hotel rooms. The board prefers expensive room rates to keep the convention small.) But the local concom has not traditionally been part of the decision-making process insofar as how the money gets spent. The con chair is in fact encouraged to keep profits from the convention as their salary for running the convention. It's quite possible that Meg Turville-Heitz plans to treat her administration of Madison's WFC as a part-time job.

▣ Tom Havighurst

[SC] Welcome back. I didn't mean to sound like *Turbo* should necessarily be a vital part of anyone's life, but I do think that members should assign it some sort of priority. Those folks for whom the apa always ends up to be the least important thing they do every other month, should think about doing something else.

I am relieved to read that your mother is doing okay. Your zine looks very spiffy and JJ is way way cool. Can we look forward to seeing her again at WisCon?

[JG] Welcome back, Tom. I'm glad you decided to re-join. And it was nice to meet JJ. I hope we get a chance to talk with her again.

▣ Kim & Kathi Nash

[JG] The annual K&K J&J party was lots of fun. It's interesting how our group has gradually created some long-term traditions among ourselves. Thanks for organizing this one.

▣ Andy Hooper

[SC] I have been writing about *Turbo ad nauseum* these last few months. I am sure people are sick of my opinions. Your excellent essay on the whole issue was a welcome relief. Thanks for clarifying some history (I thought you were OE much longer than two years, I remember how worried everyone was that you were not going to be our leader anymore) and for volunteering to take back the mantle of OE should there come a time when no one else steps up. I said last month that I felt that the OE should remain in Madison if we were going to keep our Madison identity. I still believe that, but there may come a time when it simply becomes necessary for *Turbo* to evolve into a truly international apa. I'm not ready for that yet, but it is nice to know that you will be there to take us to that level if or when the time ever comes.

[JG] This was a great time to recall some of the early history of *Turbo*. I'd almost forgotten those early months of haggling over the apa rules. I didn't realize how the turbulent experiences of *The Cult* and *Apa 69* actually

influenced *Turbo's* administration.

Yes, it does look like apa members are willing to accept a looser standard of rule enforcement. And if the next OE wants to run it that way, that's fine with me. Nevertheless, I think things run more smoothly and in the long run, more easily for the OE, if rules are strictly enforced. Scott's administration was fairly strict, but people seemed to get used to the fact that he applied the rules in an even-handed manner. I think he had to deal with far fewer negotiations for grace than OEs who were known to be more lenient. For Scott, deadline days were fairly quiet. I understand that for **Jae**, deadline day was often a pain for all the calls and requests for collation delay she received. Under Scott's administration, people seemed to take enforcement of rules less personally when they were applied with fewer exceptions. That's just my opinion, and it doesn't make any difference to the next OE's administration (or wouldn't unless I was running for the position of OE).

Gosh, did Jane Hawkins actually say she has the time to join *Turbo*? That's great. I enthusiastically second Jane's nomination!

▣ Jeannie Bergmann

[SC] Welcome. What a lovely first zine. Though I am not a great fan of poetry, you will find several other kindred spirits in this apa. I have somehow never read Terry Pratchett, but I have enjoyed Sean Stewart (who is occasionally nominated for WisCon guest of honor, I think he would get elected if more people read his work) and Neal Stephenson. Thanks for the website recommendations.

[JG] Welcome to the apa Jeannie!

I'm curious about your information about CWD and the use of bolt guns in abattoirs. Are many deer brought alive to slaughter houses? I thought almost all deer are killed in the field, in hunting situations. What percentage of deer does abattoir practice affect? I've been heavily involved in the CWD situation too. As a graphic artist working for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, I've worked on quite a few publications dealing with the disease and the DNR's response to it. (I also use a lot of USGS's maps!)

I haven't seen the new film of *Solaris*, partially because I hated the earlier version so much. How did the ending for the new film differ from the older version?

I laughed hard at "Gender Characteristics." Thanks!

▣ Jim Nichols

[SC] Thanks for the travel pieces. I gather the trip was a success in spite of the missing horses and the relatives who turned to be not-so-annoying-after-all. The South is still an area of the country I have seen very little of and look

forward to reading about when apa writers venture there.

[JG] I liked your AP-style trip report of yours and Ruth's trip to Kentucky. Next time you could perhaps you could use different styles as your template. A *People Magazine*-style party report. A *Wall Street Journal*-style conglom report. A *Good Housekeeping*-style dinner report complete with recipes and household tips. A *TV Guide*-style report of a busy summer schedule....

The nearly-all-caps essay, on the other hand, was rather hard to read, but funny nevertheless.

☐ Maureen Kincaid Speller

[SC] I certainly think that as we grow older we come to pick and choose the things we like and dislike about the holiday season. As a child I accepted pretty much everything about the season as appropriate in the proper taste and spirit, but now I look around myself at Christmas time and quickly winnow out what I consider wheat from chaff. I like the food and drink and socializing. I dislike too much fuss made at work about the season. I like snow. I dislike colored lights that blink. I usually prefer instrumental seasonal music to vocalists, but not always. Carolers I can take in small doses. I like small presents. I dislike loud, feverish, unfettered commercialism. I like seasonal expressions of peace and goodwill, I detest pious expressions of religious exclusivity (ex. columnist Cal Thomas' comments via **Georgie's** zine.) The holiday season is an unusual period of wonderful little pleasures rubbing up against sharp annoyances. No wonder it is so tiring.

I think you got some interesting responses to your request for the 10 Greatest Americans. What do you think so far? It might be interesting for you (and **Paul**) to offer lists, too. **Greg** and **Clay** declined to play while Jeanne refused to limit herself to 10, which makes it tough to weigh her choices. There were not as many Presidents as I expected and, with the exception of George Washington, no generals. Women and African Americans appeared on all the lists. In addition Native Americans appeared on some lists while non-native born Americans (Einstein and Emma Goldman at least) appeared on other lists. Edison showed up on more lists than I expected. Presidents and Supreme Court members showed up on lists, but no "great" Congressmen, what does that say?

Possibly the most controversial choice I made was Neil Armstrong. Jeanne argued that he wasn't really that great since all he did was step out of a space craft that thousands of other people built and helped guide to the moon. I thought that was an unusual attitude for a science fiction fan, but when the apa arrived, Georgie chose Lewis and Clarke. What can I say?

[JG] I love the idea of aliens landing on Earth and solving mysteries for us. I imagine that they'd make a big initial splash by revealing the truth behind mysteries known and conspiracies suspected world-wide. After that (if the world wasn't immediately plunged into warfare by all the ugly facts revealed), the aliens would set up regional offices and people could visit them with a list of their own personal mysteries. I bet this would make a great series of short stories, filmed or written. Some people really want to know the answer; others really don't. (Certainly, solutions to religious mysteries would not be welcomed by many religious types.) If such an alien mystery-solver office opened up in my neighborhood, I'd definitely visit it to find out what really happened to my history class notebooks when I was a senior in high school.

I was enrolled in an advanced-placement course, so my notes could only have been useful to a handful of kids who were taking the same exams I was taking. The morning before every test, scheduled at least once a month and sometimes more often, my history notebook disappeared. I wrote pleading notes on the inside cover to the "borrower" asking them return my notebook to me after the exam. Later, I penned angry notes to the "thief." None of the notebooks were ever returned and I never discovered what had happened to them. The morning of the final exam I sat in the library, my home room, surrounded by friends. I pointed to my notebook and asked all of them to help me watch it. I told them that my history notebook always disappeared around this time, the day before a big exam. When I walked out of the room I looked down at the stack of books in my arms. The notebook was gone. I would really like to know what happened back then!

The holiday season used to last longer when I was a kid or when I lived at home with my much younger siblings. And that seems reasonable. Kids' excitement about Christmas begins to rise after Thanksgiving, and it's impossible for anyone who lives with them not to respond to that excitement. Their teachers and fellow students feed their obsession with the upcoming holiday. They focus all their free-time thoughts on the holiday. When I was a kid, my aunts and uncles all had big families. We ourselves were a big family: there were 5 of us kids. And the weeks around Christmas were filled with visiting back and forth among the relatives. Everyone had to see each other's trees and decorations and taste each others' holiday treats.

Things are different now. Living with Scott, an adult, each of us with work schedules that don't change much until Christmas week, with responsibilities and commitments that continue through and in spite of the holidays, it's a lot more difficult to obsess about the upcoming holiday. That's OK with me. I enjoy spending some time around Christmas with my brothers' families because I like being

around kids then. But the things that make me feel happiest about the holidays are the traditions that Scott and I have developed for ourselves. Rather than planning and building up to the great gift-exchange of Christmas, the planning and building-up we do is focused more on our New Year's party. We have our small, cozy traditions. We put up our candle tree. We shop as efficiently as possible, avoiding crowds as best we can, helping one another get through our lists. I design a holiday card and we send it out. And we make sure we save Christmas Eve for one another. We make a reservation at a nice restaurant, and put a bottle of champagne in the fridge for afterwards, when we exchange presents and have a romantic evening with one another. We attend a few parties with friends during December. I enjoy baking cookies with friends from the Madison SF group. But I feel mostly removed from the public decorations, the institutional music, the advertising, and the general public extravaganza of the season. It's fun sometimes to see the lights and, in appropriate situations, hear the seasonal music, but all that (especially the advertising) could disappear and I can't say that I'd miss any of it.

Fluffy tinsel??! All along I was reading your description of the "Dickens' Syndrome" with its "massive infusion of glitter and tinsel," thinking I could picture exactly what you were talking about, but then I came up short against your strange phrase "fluffy tinsel," and realized that tinsel must be yet another word that has different meanings on either side of the Atlantic. In my experience, tinsel is the narrowly sliced ribbons of *extremely* thin, silver, metallic foil that are hung, as decoration, on trees. Some people hang tinsel in clumps; others demand that individual pieces of tinsel be hung separately, preserving each piece of tinsel's perfectly flat, pristine and vertical delicacy. My dad was of the perfectionist persuasion and took 3 or 4 hours to hang the tinsel on the family tree. By the time he was done, all us kids had been banned from the room. Another little family tradition. But no matter how it is hung, or even if it is soaked in water, the tinsel I have known can never be "fluffy." What does your tinsel look like?

I don't get the idea of Advent being a season of repentance rather than anticipation. Certainly the commercialization of the season has instilled a large amount of guilt into the mix, by convincing people that they need to buy more, bake more, decorate more, and have more fun in order to do the season right. But I don't understand the liturgical connection you say Guinery makes between Advent and repentance. At least according to the Catholic liturgy I learned in grade school, Advent and Christmas was all about celebration and anticipation... Where does Guinery find repentance?

I guess I tend to react differently than you do to clerks, people I've never met before, calling me by my first name (which I have not given them; they've taken the information from a credit card or check). It doesn't feel to me as if this shows that they care about my needs. The effect of a clerk calling a customer by their first name feels to me very much like what I think management wants it to feel like: that I am being urged to think of this clerk like a friend, rather than as a corporate representative trying to sell me something I may or may not want. Like a friend who gives their friends slack. Like a friend who trusts their friend. Like a friend who does favors for their friend. I resent the corporate culture that tries to infringe upon privileges of friendship. I feel similarly turned off when a business urges their employees to view themselves as part of a "family." Right. Maybe a dysfunctional family where the father gets to hire and fire wife and kids, and force them to work long hours by threatening to reduce their allowance, but where the wife and kids are expected to express gratitude and keep the proper attitude through it all.

□ Hope Kiefer & Karl Hailman

[SC] What a harrowing experience. I'm glad it is all over (as I am sure you are) and relived that things have worked out so well. I think **Karl** gets a special award for delivery room staying power, I wouldn't have handled it.

[JG] Good luck in your run for OEship. And congratulations on the birth of Griffin Parker Hailman. What a cutie.

—Jeanne & Scott, 20 January 2003