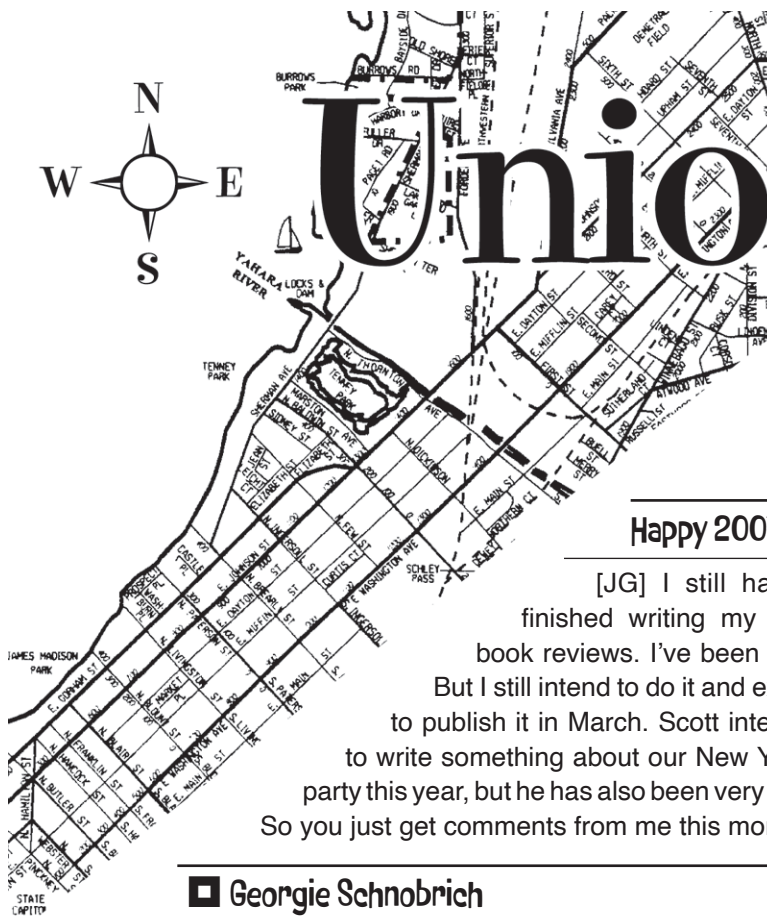




Union Street

A joint zine by Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis



Happy 200th!

[JG] I still haven't finished writing my 2002 book reviews. I've been busy. But I still intend to do it and expect to publish it in March. Scott intended to write something about our New Year's party this year, but he has also been very busy. So you just get comments from me this month.

Georgie Schnobrich

[JG] Smeagol/Gollum in *Two Towers* was indeed impressive. For a long time, the main technical problem to be overcome in animation was said to be the creation of realistic hair. But I think there was an equally difficult problem — duplicating what a really good actor does with their eyes to indicate psychological nuance and deep thought. A great actor can gaze at another actor, or at the camera, and convince the audience that all sorts of thoughts are going through their mind, decisions considered, discarded and made, all the while moving hardly a muscle on their face. Up to now, a great animated character looking at the camera without moving a pixelated muscle, merely looked frozen. But with Smeagol/Gollum, the problem has evidently been solved. If Smeagol/Gollum had been played by a skin and bones actor, I would have said that he deserved an Oscar nomination. Maybe he deserves one anyway.

I bought several Despair.com calendars this year, one as a gift and one for my office. Some of my favorite posters are:

"Ineptitude: If you can't learn to do something well, learn to enjoy doing it poorly." (Picture of a skier tumbling spectacularly)

"Limitations: Until you spread your wings, you'll have no idea how far you can walk." (Picture of a penguin running across a snow field)

"Procrastination: Hard work often pays off after time, but laziness always pays off now." (Picture of a mountain climber standing on top of a mountain)

"Consulting: If you're not part of the solution, there's good money to be made in prolonging the problem." (Picture of a handshake.)

"Cluelessness: There are no stupid questions but there are a LOT of inquisitive idiots." (Picture of a whole bunch of dead light bulbs and one lit bulb)

"Idiocy: Never underestimate the power of stupid people in large groups." (Picture of a group of skydivers, holding hands in a ring as they fall)

"Demotivation: Sometimes the best solution to morale problems is just to fire all the unhappy people." (Picture of a man sitting alone, on the floor, in a large empty room)

"Despair: It's always darkest just before it goes pitch black." (Picture of a sunset)

Somebody up there must have heard your plea for spare snow clouds. Last week we got about 5 inches. I think the Milwaukee area also got caught by the same storm. Nothing like what happened on the East coast *this* week, but impressive nonetheless for *when* we were hit. The heaviest snow fell during rush hour on Tuesday afternoon. I stood on Capitol Square for almost an hour waiting for my bus, when usually I only have to wait 5 or 10 minutes. I couldn't see more than 20 feet in front of me. The storm really slowed down Madison that afternoon! There was a very little girl waiting with her mom in the bus shelter and I had to admire how patient she was with the situation. At one point she reassured all of us crowded into the shelter that "the busses are going very, very slow, so that everyone can be safe."

▣ Gregory G. H. Rihn

[JG] What a difficult situation your family has to deal with now. I don't blame your folks for not wanting to leave their home. Nevertheless, the time will come, may already have come, when your siblings and you can find no other solution for their care. I wish you well.

Despite the family problems, it sounds like you and Georgie had a lovely holiday season. You do a lot more socializing than Scott and I tend to do.

I heard an NPR interview with Herbert Asbury who wrote the book on which the film, *Gangs of New York* was based. He gave the movie generally good marks for showing the depth of prejudice against the Irish immigrants, and downplayed the historical inaccuracies of the film. I can't forgive them as easily. The major inaccuracy, according to Asbury, was the gross exaggeration of the number of people who died as a result of gang warfare and in the big anti-draft riot. The film made it look like there were dozens of deaths. Asbury says that even during the city-wide anti-draft riot, there were barely a handful of people killed. Lots of injuries, few deaths. No Navy gunboats fired upon the rioters.

That got me to thinking that Scorsese must believe, perhaps with good reason, that modern film audiences would not think these riots were that bad if he only showed 5 or 6 deaths. We all expect to see people dropping like flies and lots of big explosions in order to react in the way Scorsese wanted us to react to the civil unrest...

Whatever Scorsese's motivation, it made me distrust other information shown in the film. I wonder now about the truth of the episode early in the film, when the warring fire-fighters looted buildings as their "payment" for fighting fires. I was skeptical of other seemingly historical details too. Asbury did say in that NPR interview, that the candle-in-the-windows episode actually happened. People showed their support for a riot in this way. However, it did *not* happen the night before the draft-riots. It preceded another, later riot.

Maybe if I hadn't heard beforehand about the changes Scorsese made in the interest of a more dramatic plot, I would have enjoyed this movie more than I did...

You asked **Jae** where she got the iron pills. They're available without prescription in drug stores. I know. I take them regularly. I've had a problem with inadequate iron in my blood for more than 30 years.

I think you're probably right about parochial schools cherry-picking their students. I went to a Catholic grade school for 4th–8th grades, and remember several students whose misbehavior sent them "back to Calhoun," which was the name of the closest public grade school.

▣ Jeannie Bergmann

[JG] I'm see you spell your name with an "-ie" ending. I used to spell it that way too. Since getting rid of the "i" and changing my name to a mono-syllabic pronunciation, a lot of people still seem to think my name is pronounced with two syllables.

You're right, some of those so-called martinis *do* sound drinkable, and that's something I never thought I'd ever say. My taste in alcoholic drinks runs mainly to cocktails whose fruity ingredients completely disguise the presence of alcohol. I don't think I'd have been able to stay conscious through even two of those poinsettia drinks. I'm glad you had fun and hope you make it to our New Year's party next year.

You didn't make up "friends of Dorothy." That was indeed a sort of password among gays and lesbians in the 1950s and early 60s.

You make an interesting distinction between "greatest" Americans and the merely "most influential" Americans. I think the reason I'm so intrigued by this discussion of great Americans that **Maureen** started is that the lists we make say a lot about what each of us thinks is ideally great about America. There would probably be a much higher rate of agreement about which Americans are considered influential compared to those who are called great. All the names you put on your influential list are people I would consider criminal to some degree.

To describe someone as a great American, they have to be an American, of course (which disqualifies your nomination of Hawking, sorry). But I also think a great American changes the way that we think of ourselves as Americans—for the better. For me, great Americans are those who shake up common perceptions of American ideals. The "founding fathers" shook things up first, of course, but there have been many points in our history when someone stood up and loudly said we're on the wrong track; we should be going *this way*. And suddenly or gradually we took the way that hadn't even been visible to most of us, in part because that person's words or deeds pointed the way.

I hope you don't mind if I talk a little bit about my list of Great Americans here in this comment to you. I didn't have time to go into detail in our last zine, and you seem to be the only person still talking about it in this issue of *Turbo*.

Thomas Jefferson and George Washington were at the forefront of defining for the first time, what Americans should and could be. Elizabeth Cady Stanton articulated ideas essential to the women's movement. Emma Goldman and Eugene V. Debs championed the rights of the working class and are responsible for many workforce reforms we take for granted today. Margaret Sanger blazed the way

for the idea that women must control their own bodies. Abraham Lincoln addressed the profound injustice embedded into America's constitution by our founding fathers by abolishing slavery. George Gershwin and Aaron Copeland created astonishingly unique music that has come to define the sound of America. Like Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt was yet another re-definer of America's responsibilities to its citizens and to other nations. And I can't leave his dynamic partner out of this. Eleanor Roosevelt was very much a part of the mid-20th century redefinition of American values. Sinclair Lewis and Arthur Miller did for literature what Gershwin and Copeland did for music, and more, by using literature as a tool for much needed reform. Georgia O'Keefe created a painting style that now seems typically American. Martin Luther King Jr. fought significant battles and enunciated crucial truths about African American rights in modern society, and Thurgood Marshall, through his leadership in the Supreme Court, re-defined the legal system to reflect those truths. It's harder to justify Robert M. LaFollette's contribution to the modern Progressive cause, but it's also hard not to include at least one great Wisconsinite. Rachel Carson drew America's attention to the environmental crisis, Ralph Nader continues to act the watchdog against the very "influential" leaders of American commerce.

Basically all the people on my list of great Americans were revolutionaries of one sort or another.

Thanks for that link to 8 Legged Entertainment web page. Lots of fun. And surprisingly smooth, fast video even with just a modem connection.

▣ Ruth Nichols

[JG] It's funny how I'm always surprised that everyone's houses don't have basements. Where do they keep all their stuff??

I'll be interested to hear how you feel about working out of your house if you decide to take the offer from your company. One of the things I'm thinking about if my job gets cut on the chopping block of Governor Doyle's budget is that I could probably do a lot of DNR jobs on a freelance basis. I'm less concerned about the socializing changes of that than I am by my doubts that I would be very good at running a business myself. Also some of my work habits — liking to finish things before starting something new — will be things I'll have to work on changing. But I wish you well in your own decisions. Whether you decide to accept the severance package or process claims at home, I hope everything works out for you.

Thanks for the camping trip story. I really enjoyed reading it.

▣ Tom Havighurst

[JG] **Hope** has been OE before?? I don't think so. Nevertheless, how could you resist the temptation of having the OE live in the same house you live in? Pretty convenient!

So, who in the *Star Trek*(s) cast is JJ like? This could be a pretty amusing game. I'll choose Scotty for me: technically accomplished, competent, but tending to freak out once in a while when put under pressure.

WHY don't you like Bill Cosby? He's not a personal hero of mine, but his name would never even appear on even a very long list of disreputable famous people. Howard Stern I can understand, but Bill Cosby ...?

Sounds like your high school friend, Eve, gave a memorable performance. I also like Barb Jenson's singing quite a lot and know what you mean by saying that she packs so much of her emotions into her music. But I suspect that a performer can't *always* pour their emotion into their performances. Maybe Eve has her better nights, and Barb has her less emotive nights. That's kind of like life too.

Scott and I hope you and JJ are able to join us at our next New Year's Eve party.

▣ Lisa Freitag

[JG] I'm so glad to hear that William enjoyed *Spirited Away!* I've been recommending it like mad to everyone, including folks with kids, and it's good to know that it's not too weird for kids. I was just blown away by it.

And I'm glad to hear, too, that your experience at the WisCon writers' workshop was a positive one. Are you going to participate again at WisCon 27?

I laughed at how, when the table was turned, your family was just as reluctant to travel during the holidays as you have always been. You will have the upper hand in future negotiations since they know you traveled *in spite of* the inconvenience that stopped all of them this year. They won't be able to put a guilt trip on you for not wanting to travel, especially with William, when none of them traveled last year!

While I sympathize with your opinion of how busy **Hope** must be, and wonder with you how she might be able to manage OE duties on top of everything. But I think it really is up to Hope to say when and if she runs as OE. I only wish she had come forward and volunteered earlier.

□ Kathleen Martinson

[JG] Is the phrase really “blind sighted”? Have I been mis-speaking and mis-writing all this time? I thought it was “blind-sided.”

Welcome to *Turbo*, Kathleen. You’re doing just fine. Hope you enjoy yourself!

Tracy Benton

[JG] Yum! I’ll have to look for those Big Green Triangle chocolates when we go to England. I love hazelnuts. I especially like Cadbury’s candy bars made of very dark chocolate with whole hazelnuts embedded in them.

What a fabulous trip report, Tracy. I’m looking forward to reading the convention chapter(s) in *Wabe* 6. Thank you.

Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis,
20 February 2003