

# Union St

*Union Street #1 is a two-way thoroughfare, trafficked by Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll from 2825 Union Street, where else, in Madison, Wisconsin 53704-5136. Thanks, Kim, for letting Jeanne back into the Turbo-Charged Party Animal apa under false pretenses. This is an Obsessive Press publication #100, and is copyright © 1989 by Jeanne Gomoll and Scott Custis. Under the new copyright law, this isn't strictly neces-*

*sary any more since the courts now seem to be willing to grant the artists and authors far more control of their own work (which may explain the crack-down at Kinko's vis a vis cartoons, etc.), but lawyers tell me that they're still encouraging their clients to use the © symbol simply as a declaratory statement. September 1989. Members FWA.*

Welcome to a whole new zine by Jeanne Gomoll and Scott Custis. We'll be sharing editorial duties here, and maybe as time goes on, will engage in a little banter. For now, I'll just tell you that you can identify me [JG] by the san-serif type and Scott [SC] by the serifs. There is certainly something deeply and psychologically significant about that division of type faces, but I'll hold the dark truth for some later issue when neither Scott nor I has gotten around to finishing the apa and we need a little quick minac.

It took us a while to agree on the title of our zine. I thought up several perfectly wonderful titles, but at times Scott tends more toward formality than I do and resisted such doozers as **When Worlds Collude** and **Dual Exhaust System**. We had decided to keep our contributions limited to four sides of paper, and so I thought **Four Sheets to the Wind** might be nice, but Scott held out for **Union Street**. And I'm glad he did. As soon as it occurred to us, the title sounded perfect. I've got the feeling we'll be using it often, here and other places, eventually.

But here we are now. Most of you know us already. We'll try to sneak in some autobiographical hints here and there for those of you who don't, but this time, we'll just dive in with some mailing comments... Scott begins:

## ANDY HOOPER

[SC] I enjoyed the first draft of "The Barnstormer." I think it is very daring of you to submit fiction to the APA. It's not that I think it requires courage for you to let us read your work; you have never struck me as being shy or self-conscious. Rather it takes guts to submit work to a medium where the feedback can often be so paltry or brief. The most frequent and frustrating complaint about apazines is that people burn out from doing so much work every month and getting so little meaningful feedback. If that is true for normal zines, it must be doubly so for original fiction, even a first draft.

Anyway I appreciate the effort you must put in and look forward to other pieces from you.

I will share a few impressions here, although I don't pretend to be anything more than a very average reader/critic.

I was surprised at the point in the story where the narrative moved in the direction of the fantasy/supernatural. I guess I should have assumed that it would contain SF or supernatural elements, but the first half of the story gave me no hint that was the direction we would be heading, so it seemed to me that it did not fit in well with the tone of the first half. Perhaps some subtle foreshadowing, or some other slight hint about the kind of story you were setting up early on would have helped. I liked best the dialog. The give and take between characters was great. The early description of the trip up to the funeral read the slowest for me.

[JG] Good powerful, fantasy, Andy. It kept me fascinated to the end. And I kind of liked the surprising switch to fantasy. Possibly if the story had been part of an SF collection, I would have expected it, but that's one of the neat things about reading a manuscript. The plot is the best part of this piece; it reminded me a little of one of my favorite writer's conceits. Alice Munro sometimes does these neat little twists in which she makes us sympathize with a character and pulls us along but then has that character do something awful...

I do have a criticism, though, along the lines of another I made once about a different story of your's. The character of the grandmother, Lillian Bell, lacked dimension. The painful ending would have been far more powerful if we had been able to care more about Lillian, or to at least understand why Spencer cared so much about her. All you say is that she was one of the most beautiful women in the area, but you never even say what she actually looked like, much less anything else beyond her looks. I would like to hear Spencer describe her as a girl, to tell the narrator what she was like.

## STEVE SWARTZ

[SC] I thought Wholly Shit #4 was an excellent contribution. Your short description of your trip to NYC got me interested in your friends Dave and Mark and Wendy. At first, I wanted to talk about Dave, to criticize him for his gun control stance and the way he seemed to be handling his relationship with Wendy. But then I realized that I have no right to make judgements about these people that I don't even know. But your

vivid description almost made me think I could. I also liked your train story of your trip to Florida with the mother and two kids. It makes me want to ask if you ever heard from them again. Travelling was the continuing theme of your zine, and it made me want to go myself. It's been over a year since our last real trip somewhere and you made me homesick for the road. However I tend not to meet interesting people as easily as you seem to; perhaps that is the tradeoff for going with someone. Graceland is not high on my travelling priority list, but if in the neighborhood, I certainly would go see it.

Your rant about "too many goddamn people have opinions about things that are none of their business" was interesting. I don't necessarily disagree with you, but I do have a couple of questions. To vote for "sensible" people, you first have to determine that they are sensible. How? Or rather, how else other than to ask their opinions on issues and compare them with your own? At what point does an individual have a right to an opinion (and to express it) about an issue? When does it become his "business"? Your point of view seems to suggest a certain contempt for folks outside of Washington, and how much they know about the world. Once again, this was a great zine.

[JG] I agree with Scott: your zine was great. Good writing! A really enjoyable travelogue and also, I admired the depth of your emotional vocabulary. Sometimes it seems to me that not a lot of men care about or are capable of carrying on in-depth discussions of relationships. You seem to be one of the exceptions. Nice to know you.

I loved your speculation on the peculiar New York, survival mindset and it got me thinking. The idea would make an interesting fantasy from the point of view of a telepath who knows that we do all actually live in different worlds. We see different colors; physical laws work differently for each of us, etc. . . . We do all go to different conventions!

## CATHY GILIGAN

[SC] First Steve, now you. After reading these two zines, back-to-back, I was really hungry for the road. What's worse, I am on vacation right now and we have no travel plans (shortage of money). It was nice to read something pleasant about driving through Iowa. One of the things I liked about the movie, *Field of Dreams*, was that I thought it showed how it is possible for Iowa cornfields and geometric landscape to be lush and beautiful in its own way. It's something a native can usually see, but hard to point out to an outsider. Acquired taste, perhaps. For all your adventures, it did not really sound like you had a good time. You enjoyed some of the scenery, but mostly talked about your struggles. I don't intend that as a criticism, I just want to know if that is really the impression of the trip you intended.

[JG] One sure way to get a Scott Custis comment is to either praise or disparage his home state. I was kind of expecting him to identify that 5-watt light bulb gas station. From your description of the route, it's got to have been near his hometown.

## VIJAY BOWEN

[SC] Your contribution was short, but very thought-provoking. Your comments gave me some very detailed insight into something I have always been curious about. Like alot of guys I've known, I have periodically been tempted to get a tattoo. What stops me is always the problem of permanence (and sobriety). In so far as I know, tattoos are still forever. I don't know if I could make a fashion decision that I MUST be happy with forever.

I agree with your statement that it should be OK to do these things in order to make a definite statement about yourself. You will probably get remarks along the lines of "Your body is a temple you shouldn't fuck with" or "Making such changes by 'damaging' your body indicates an inner self-hatred," but I feel that people should be free to be dissatisfied with what they were born with and should go ahead and make changes they feel comfortable with. Also, not all the things discussed were as permanent as tattoos. Ear piercing is in fashion for men these days and I have thought about it for myself. Like most such decisions, I know I am afraid of it because it is something really new I've never done. Maybe someday. One thing I am pretty sure of. I don't think the pain will strike me as sensual.

[JG] Thanks for sending me a copy of your WAPA-zine; right from the first sentence of "Footsteps" I felt like I already knew you.

I share with Jerry a certain sense of revulsion with respect to body-piercing jewelry. Not about anyone else's behavior, merely the possibility for my own body. But your description of the erotic feelings engendered by piercing, encircling, rubbing jewelry reminded me of my own similar enjoyment of turtleneck tops and choker necklaces, and I find that I can begin to understand it now. Not that I'm going to go out and have my ears pierced, just that I can understand now why I won't. The reason I don't wear jewelry, but especially rings, is precisely because of all those sensual messages they send: I dislike the distrac-tion. I use my fingers and hands especially as receptors and senders of information, and I've never reconciled hands-as-decorative-objects with that point of view. . . . So for me it's not anti-life imagery — it's more anti-function.

## RICHARD RUSSELL

[SC] Dick, I am in no position to comment on the bulk of the material in your zine. However, I would like to make a couple comments to you. First, I like your zine and your writing and hope you don't become discouraged and leave. One thing about your zine that I like is that I don't always agree with you. Although you seem stubborn, at times, who isn't? It's the discussion that counts. Secondly, no one in the APA deserves the personal nastyness that is sometimes sent your way in print. You have usually ignored it or responded with good humor (as you did to Andy in the first section of your zine labelled "Thanks"). I respect that approach; it will pay off in the end.

[JG] I guess I'm in a slightly better position to comment on your program book travails than Scott was, having gone through it several times. And you do have my sympathy. However I must admit to laughing a small ironic laugh at the poetic justice of it all: you, of all people, finally stuck in that thankless position of waiting for others to

finish their work before you can finish your's. (heh heh. Maybe it will make you a Better Person, Dick!) However, in answer to your plea for a review, I thought last year's program book was pretty well done. It was easy to use, clear and readable. There were some nice graphics inside. Congratulations to you and your Mac (without which there would probably have been no program book given the tight timeline).

Now. Colophones. Fandom's need for a word led to a very Laadan like situation where a word (or rather, a homonym) was created from an already existing word. Something more than masthead was needed because the Brits and Australian fans do fanzines in which this thing was always at the end of the zine rather than at the beginning or at its head. And it seemed something more than a masthead because some fans were turning this thing into an artform of its own. (See John D. Berry's zines.) And so *voila*, a new homonym. I don't think it's too upsetting. I get upset when we lose words (like when nouns get turned into verbs and perfectly good dynamic verbs are abandoned and language becomes dull and clogged.) New words, or even new meanings for old words seem to me a sign of life, and I kind of like that.

The reduced SF<sup>3</sup> logo doesn't print nearly as well as those other colophons, does it? she says pointedly.

### ALGERNON S. STEWART

[JG] I liked your essay on the flag-burning stuff. Silly stuff. You don't suppose they're trying to distract us do you? At the July 4 pro-choice march and rally on State Street, a bunch of people really really wanted to burn the flag, and ironically I think that it's a lot more likely to happen than before those guys started talking about how we need a law to prevent it. But the flag didn't get burned... partly because of some great street theater. Two guys brought out a soiled, bloodied, torn, stained US flag and identified all the spots (like the oil stain on the 50th star), and talked about how dirty its been getting lately. "We don't need to BURN this flag," they yelled. "No! . . . We've got to WASH it!" And they they brought out this big bucket of water, and sprayed 409 on the flag and started scrubbing it in the bucket. Wild. And very symbolic. Funny how flags work that way. As symbols I mean.

### JULIE SHIVERS

[JG] Damn it. I'm going to try to do this again. The computer just ate the last 10 paragraphs I typed with a system bomb, and they were all to you Julie. Maybe that means Mac thinks I should try to be more succinct...

What I said and will try to say again is that I hope you will reconsider DARE (Defend Abortion Rights Emergency). The meetings are somewhat better now, a little more organized. But most of all I think its an important enough issue that we all need to do some work on this issue regardless of how painful it might be.

I think you're a little spoiled by your SF<sup>3</sup> experience; I'm continually surprised by how much we've all learned and taught one another through the zines and WisCon. Many of the people you saw at that meeting (which after

all was only the second one), have never been involved in a group like SF<sup>3</sup>. Many were women who've never been involved in any groups whatsoever but feel that this time, for this issue, they have to get involved.

# DARE

**DEFEND ABORTION RIGHTS EMERGENCY**

### Meeting Dates

September 24

October 8

October 22

6:30 pm

**Check "Today at the Union"  
Memorial Union, for room numbers**

But more than inexperience, the disorganization of DARE comes from the fact that it is a coalition. By definition we are not made up of a group of completely like-minded people. We agree on one issue, that women must retain the freedom to control their own bodies, but we come to that belief from a variety of ideologies. The whole point of a coalition is that individuals and groups temporarily put aside their differences in ideology, or even of organizational habits, and cooperate. But sometimes it takes a while to get to the point where a coalition can begin to do things.

For instance, the ISO (International Socialist Organization) has a lot of its members in the group and were completely flabbergasted last week when they confronted women in DARE whose only previous group experience has been in feminist groups. Several ISO people had never been involved in feminist groups and were amazed at the different assumptions. Like they learned that men were not going to be made committee chairs and heard for the first time, the theory of empowering women in groups concerned with women's issues. Well they're learning. The people who've never belonged to any groups are learning

I'm learning. And experiencing a few anxiety attacks when it seems to me that merely the act of saying something that indicates I know how to do something has landed me with assumptions that I will do it and an overload of work. But I'm going to handle that.

In any case, I can understand your frustration and wariness of this big disorganized group. But the issue is too important to turn your back on the only group in Madison that is working on this vital stuff: our freedoms, our bodies. I know that regardless of what else is going on in my life that I have to do something to fight for my freedoms and privacy. It's going to be a long battle and that's depressing because I may spend all my life just trying to keep (or not to lose too much of) what we won a decade ago... But if I don't do something now, I fear I'll spend the rest of my life paying the price for complacency.

So come back again. And you too, Hope. The next meeting is September 24 at 6:30 pm. Check the Memorial Union "Today at the Union" for the room number.

**HOPE KIEFER**

[SC] From personal experience, I feel I know something of what you are going through with your mother. It is a very tough situation, and I don't have any advice on how to make it easier. Perhaps it is enough to say that we care and are thinking of you. If there is something we can do, of course, you need only let us know.

I think I agree with your four stars for *The Abyss* and *Parenthood* (little uncertain what your scale of comparison means. I suppose the more stars the better). I thought *The Abyss* has been very underrated by critics. It kept me on the edge of my seat and only the ending was disappointing. I would be happy to sit through it again and just walk out before the last ten minutes of the film.

So now I will be waiting for the second installment of name misspellings. That is the installment where YOUR name on the business mail gets mauled.

**LUCY NASH**

[JG] There were only 200 at the Trek convention? Or was that just on Sunday? They must have lost a lot of money considering all that TV advertising I saw during Star Trek shows...

**KIM NASH**

[SC] "Working with lawyers is different from working with real people." Quit whining. You should try a day with a bunch of wild and raging out-and-out wackos once. You'd be kissing those lawyer's wing tips, offering to carry their briefcases. Just let me know when you're ready to trade.

What you need when you are in one of those deep blue funks (I gather they will come more frequently the closer you get to WisCon) is a seedy bar serving cold, tasteless beer with a jukebox that never heard of rock and roll music. In fact, only knows old pre-1975 cry-in-your-awful-beer country songs. A few hours and dollars invested in such an environment and you will be right back in the pink again. Let me know next time you think you're in the mood for this cure. We may have to look for the right place, but it's easy for me to get in the right frame of mind. All I have to do is think about my job.

[JG] Good luck with Coordinatorship and OE-ship. (Aye-aye captain!) And good for you that you expect to enjoy it. That's the only way to take on any responsibility.

Why are you so depressed lately? Do you just find it easier to write about it rather than talk about it? It's funny — you've always seemed to me to be one of the most eminently sane, relaxed, and happy people I've ever known. You never seem to rail against life but simply enjoy what you get out of it. But that doesn't seem to be the case when you write about your life. So what gives? What is it about life that gets you down when you're feeling depressed?



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