



Welcome to *Union Street* (issue #21 and *Obsessive Press* #120), the zine with the transmuting masthead (this month thanks to Steve Johnson). It is published by Jeanne Gomoll and Scott Custis, who reside in their home at 2825 Union Street, Madison, WI 53704-5136. Phone 608-246-8857. *Union Street* was created on a Macintosh computer—a IIx or an SE at various points in its lifetime—and hardcopy was printed on a Laserwriter IIINTX printer. Text was created with Microsoft Word 4.0 and laid out with Aldus Pagemaker 4.0. The *Union Street* Logo was designed with Adobe Illustrator 3.0 and Adobe Photoshop 1.0.7 All contents are copyrighted © by Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll, 1991. July 1991 for Turbo-Charged Party Animal APA #61. Members FWA.

## OFFICIAL BUSINESS STUFF

(SC) We gave you our check (\$4.00) at the WisCon meeting. I prefer this method of handling expenses to the blanket \$10. per year charge you proposed earlier. I do not have any nominations for your “constitutional congress” because I think it is a bad idea. It isn’t necessary. I don’t see why you would want to create a level of bureaucracy to handle rule issues that you could deal more efficiently with yourself. It is difficult to get the rules changed, but I think that is a good thing. It has discouraged the natural bureaucrats from legislating the apa to death and prevented many messy rule fights. I’ve supported rule changes that haven’t passed, but those failures haven’t ruined the apa. The small number of vague rules we have gives the OE maximum flexibility to run things and I believe that is the way most of us would like it to be. This whole “congress” idea is much too vague anyway. How much power do they have? Why four people instead of all apa members who happen to be at WisCon? Is this really fair to overseas contributors who can’t come to WisCon and may not know anyone stateside who is coming? Isn’t this a bad precedent to set? We should all have equal input on rule changes. Can four people really know how specific rule changes will impact on everyone else? What if they decide a bunch of shit the rest of us (or the OE) don’t agree with? War? Mass defections? Election of a new OE? I think this is a drastic solution to a minor problem.

I will cast my half vote in favor of Kim Winz’s motion to restore rules improperly (possibly illegally) removed by the OE. I also cast my half vote for Pat Hario’s motion to make the OE specifically subject to the same rules we are.

(JG) Come on, Kim—a “constitutional congress” is even more unfair to out-of-town Turboapa members than any decision-making process we’ve had up to now. If you have enough power to make up such a radically new rule change as this one is (or as were the blanket rule changes you instituted in the last issue of the apa), you certainly have the power to revise rule #8 (old rule #9) into a *workable* discussion/voting procedure. Simply allowing a month for discussion before a mandatory vote would require fewer and less radical changes than the route on which you’re leading us. You have already assured us that it’s an impossible task to propose rule changes one month and expect votes to come in by the next-issue deadline,

but I guess I’ll try one more time: **I propose that rule #8 (old rule #9) be revised to allow for not less than one issue for discussion between proposal and voting deadline.**

I am totally against rule-making by elite committee.

Also, I support Kim Winz’s proposal that the OE’s unilateral rule changes be rescinded. I’m actually in favor of the mailing agent changes made and will happily vote for mailing agents to be considered an *OE option* if the OE chooses to propose it. (I say, take the whole matter of mailing agents out of the official rules. If the OE—whoever is the OE) wants to take on the work of being everyone’s OE...fine. If not, that’s fine too. Then out-of-towners will have to make their own arrangements. But the matter should be up to the person who has to do the administrative work, not we who benefit from it.) In any case, I agree with Kim Winz that for the OE to declare himself to be exempt from all rules that apply to all other apa members makes a terrible precedent. And so I also support Pat Hario’s complimentary proposal to make that point explicit and to include the OE in rule #8 (old rule #9).

[Rewriting that rule with both Pat’s and my own changes would cause it to state the following: ***Should any member or the OE wish to change the way things are done in the apa, a proposal should be submitted in writing for inclusion in the apa, in as clear a form as possible. Votes on the proposal will be tallied after no less than one issue of the apa has been published in the interim between proposal and voting deadline. A simple majority (13 votes) is needed to pass the proposal.***]

## KIM NASH

(SC) I had a terrific time at the wedding and reception. Congratulations to you both. I’m looking forward to “Kim and Kathi’s Adventures in House Hunting.”

(JG) For some of us, things that are interesting and entertaining overlap with things we consider important and/or politically correct. I guess you must be finding it necessary to skip a lot of Scott’s and my writing. I find that a little disappointing.



Once more, (re your comment to **Bill Humphries**): the actual changes you've made aren't being perceived as "power madness," by most people. It's the way you are making these changes that has people objecting. If it weren't for your decision to "stop being nice," which ostensibly was supposed to save you time and trouble, I doubt that you would now be having any problems in the apa. A small amount of tact would have spared you a huge amount of hassle, which is ironic. Notice that the rash of recent rule change proposals *all* result from your style, not from any basic dissatisfaction with your actual work on the apa.

## KATHI NASH

(SC) That was a championship wedding-hell story you shared with us. I thought I had heard all the variations on wedding disasters. Of course, she was considerate enough not to tell you this story until after you passed the planning Point-of-No-Return, right?

As it turned out, you had nothing to worry about. Your wedding seemed to run without a hitch. Congratulations. I had a marvelous time.

## ANDY HOOPER

(SC) Very nice covers. Thank you. I thought your Part 3 history of Madison segment was excellent. James Doty is clearly a controversial character that I would like to learn more about. His dealings appear to be too complex to summarize easily.

I still disagree with a couple points you brought up in your comment to us, but I only want to respond here to one. You concluded by stating that you felt we had no "right to judge the world that went before," "we were not there and cannot trust history to tell us what we call truth." Making judgements about the past is the whole point of studying history in the first place. We are supposed to learn from past mistakes and crimes as well as successes. We can certainly evaluate past events with our current value systems, how else are we to know what progress we've made? Our knowledge of history is imperfect. We always have to change our perceptions as we learn new facts or establish new theories. But that is the nature of the subject. We cannot let that stop us from trying to draw conclusions about ourselves and our past from what we believe to be true.

My knee is still sore from all the jerking.

(JG) I still have some arguments on this subject too. I don't think it's necessary to make a choice between (1) extending adequate health care and education services to Native Americans or (2) avoiding the destruction of their culture. And we're not just talking about the past, after all; everything connects. Recently there's been a lot said in the media about Yugoslavia's current cultural clashes. I've read several editorial opinions about how American cultural preservation movements could conceivably lead to Yugoslavian-like civil unrest, suggesting that we should encourage the erasure of any and all cultural boundaries; that differences "cause" dissension. And I think that's bullshit. By that reasoning, the world will not find peace until all cultures subsume into one, and that's a hateful philosophy. We make peace by understanding one another's cultures. Destroying or ignoring the culture next door leads to hatred. Anyway, I think it's important to try

to learn as much as we can about our own pasts, and whether that information is complete or not, to make judgements based on what we know...and then to live our lives based on our conclusions.

If we say we can't judge history, then conceivably we might feel safe from judgement in the future. ("They weren't here; they won't have all the facts. I can't be judged."...Which sounds eerily like what some recent administrations seem to have believed.) I prefer that my leaders know that they *will* be called to account, so they'd better listen to their consciences.

## CATHY GILLIGAN

(SC) If I haven't seen you before you receive this, I want a copy of the Ellison article. Thanks.

"Wringing our hands about the past" does not do us any good. That does not mean we should forget it, diminish it or fail to learn from it.

I look forward to reading something from Greg in the apa at some point. He is welcome, after all, we've heard so much about him.

(JG) Your comments about the controversy surrounding the naming of rape victims' names reminds me of an article that Scott and I were impressed by: "Media Goes Wilding in Palm Beach," by Katha Pollitt, one of my favorite essay-writers. The whole controversy upset me in a sort of obscure, uncomfortable way. I knew there was stuff—assumptions, underlying messages—involved that made me tremendously distrustful of the media's reasons for revealing the names of the alleged rape victim of William Smith. Pollitt's article clarified it all for me (as she always does; she's such an extraordinarily *clear* writer), and though I remain uncomfortable, now I know *why*.

I hope you will find the reprint which follows our zine as interesting as Scott and I did.

## JULIE SHIVERS

(SC) Congratulations on finding an apartment. I'm sure I (and the car) will be available to help you move.

(JG) Well, the following comment is out of date now that you and **Bill H.** have already found a place, but...

Having never gone apartment hunting is the very *best* reason for doing so now! If you ever need to rent your own place, you will have gained enormous, essential information from having gotten through the hardest time (the first time) with experienced help. And more important—if you ever buy a house, apartment hunting is the preferred prerequisite...otherwise you will make all your mistakes at the worst time (because you'll find it much more difficult to escape a mortgage than it is to get out of—or simply outlast—a lease. Go *with* Bill, at least, and learn what you can. You're reading up on weddings, I know, and when you finally get to be the star of your own wedding ceremony, you'll be incredibly well prepared. Well, house-buying is more complex than weddings, and there are a lot more far-reaching consequences. You should be "studying" for house-buying too, and one great way to do that is by checking out apartments.

**LAURA SPIESS**

(SC) Thank you for dropping off Steven King's *The Stand* the other day. You left before I got a chance to ask you what you thought of it. So, what did you think?

Fascinating work stuff. What do you expect will happen once you turn in your report on the ID team? Can we expect meaningful changes from it, or will your workloads be expanded too much to make time for such a team approach impractical? I'm curious since it seemed to be a good idea and you enjoyed it. Can you tell us where your current district runs?

**DIANE MARTIN**

(SC) Since we both approached the issue of joint memberships last month, I'm going to watch closely for reaction this month, particularly from non-joint members.

Does this move to a new office building mean you will be getting an Executive Suite?

(JG) I don't want to boycott you (with mailing comments), Diane. I do question the current use of joint memberships. Your offering yourself as a sacrifice wasn't quite the response I expected.

What a wonderful evocation of Wisconsin scenery. I agree with you about the special beauty of our landscape: it may not have the heart-stopping, dramatic beauty of a mountainous or ocean-side landscape, but you're right—it often draws out a quiet, calming emotion when observed... I never tire of Wisconsin's countryside vistas—for their frequent changes and for what I've learned of their formation. (I love glacial geology, a science that functions almost like folklore for me: I mean, it's hard to really believe that mile-high walls of ice once loomed outside my bedroom window, but fascinating to contemplate and wondrous to discover clues for. Sometimes ancient myths like Persephone's who returns each Spring from Hades bringing warm weather back with her, feel remarkably similar to geological explanations for how Devil's lake came to be damned up by two giant glacial moraines.)

I love the gentle terrain of our state (and the "big sky" that Spike commented upon when she returned a couple weeks ago, having missed that in the mountain and city-bound place she lives now). Which all wells up to cause great irritation when I think about the design that Parks & Recreation (the Wisconsin DNR bureau) chose for its official Wisconsin Parks T-Shirt. They apparently purchased rights for this design from another state (I suspect Colorado or Idaho) and though the colors are lovely (sky blue, green, and lavender) the image is just plain silly and plainly *not* Wisconsin! Behind the blue water and the green conifers are magnificent purple mountains majesty. I still don't understand why *anyone* would think this was appropriate for a Wisconsin image. Do you....? →→→→→→→→

**STEVE JOHNSON**

(JG) A very brave thing it is you've done to write about your experience in such a public forum. It could, and I hope it does help you to move some of the pain outside yourself and to be able to deal with your feelings about the experience in a constructive manner.

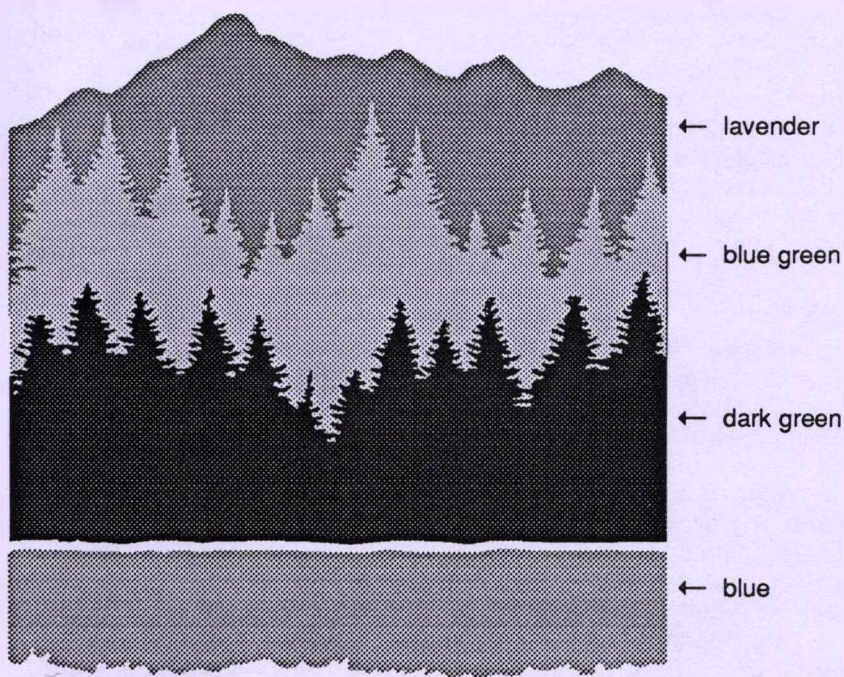
From what I've heard from friends or read about, your sudden recollection of this childhood trauma in bits and pieces, years after it occurred, is not uncommon. Women who were sexually abused frequently remember that experience when their own child reaches the same age they were when it happened. Or adults seem to begin to remember when they are finally able to handle those memories. Maybe this is the case for you: you are now strong and self-aware enough to handle the memories.

My overriding impression of the amusing "Another Transmission from ORION" was that you've begun to internalize "Michael's" style of speaking/communicating and that you are practicing the art of channeling yourself. Well?

Have you seen the show on the local public access cable TV station with the woman doing Michael channeling? I've only seen a few moments of it, but I thought it was a little silly.

Nope, I'm not allergic to cats or any other animal except mosquitos. As I've said before, I actually don't hate cats so much as I am apathetic about them. And in the frequently cat-obsessive atmosphere of Madison fandom, my definite lack of enthusiasm (and sometimes cynical comments) about cats translates into hatred, I guess. But no, there's nothing physical about my disinterest in cats. It sounds to me like the channeller was making a guess.

None of the channeled remarks you reported in your zine "hit a nerve." Certainly nothing about my relationship with cats felt as though it was about me. I'd really have to stretch any of the other comments to find anything percep-



Wisconsin Parks, Trails and Forests. Explore and Enjoy!



tive about myself: there was no more in it for me than there is in the daily Virgo horoscope that the newspaper prints. My reading in California, in which the Michael channeler was speaking directly to me, however, was different and gave me lots of very interesting insights about myself and my relationships. The difference, I think, comes in because she is a perceptive person who was expressing her own conscious or unconscious understanding of me. It's always valuable to discover how others perceive you. This is important information whether it reflects internal reality or not, because it helps us fine-tune our interaction with others. And so too, I think your discussion with the Michael channeler is valuable to you insofar as you are using the information to explore your own internal-landscape and less valuable if you are using the information to understand other people's motivations. When I asked about other people at that California session, I got exactly the answers I wanted—that people I disliked were still at the infant stage in their reincarnations and that people with whom I was involved (in love or in conflict) were linked to me by karma or by pre-birth agreements.

Since I've already stated that I distrust the fact that religions provide assurance for what people need and want to believe, you can see how that effect in the Michael channelling also turned me off...

However, as you can see by this month's masthead, Scott and I got a kick out of our designation as a "Lover Monad."

(SC) Very disturbing Personal Comment. I have no comment to make in response other than to say that I found it fascinating.

I was watching the first part of Carl Sagan's "Cosmos" the other night and I thought of Peacock. Sagan said several times that it was almost certain that there must exist many other planets like ours in the vastness of the galaxy. He treated the concept that life exists elsewhere as a given. Of course leaping from there to the idea that we have been visited by aliens is pretty farfetched in my opinion, yet maybe it's not quite as improbable as John stubbornly argued.

I think the channeler was right about possible instability in our Monad. I detected a little of it the other day when we were playing croquet in our back yard. Jeanne came under the influence of some evil spirits, who looked just like Bill Bodden, Bill Humphries and Michael Shannon, and decided to launch my ball across the yard into the bushes. The old Monad was shakin' like crazy for a while that afternoon!

## BILL HOFFMAN

(JG) Fascinating stuff, Bill. As you say, each human consciousness is unique. The fact that you've drawn your inspiration from cunnilingus and cows eyes scooped out of carcasses at Oscar Mayer, bears that out with emphasis!

After reading your essay, I began thinking about how telling or writing about an experience actually replaces the original memory of the experience. I think we began talking about this phenomenon when you were in town. But, now here's more. (At the moment, this feels like a tremendous inspiration flash, though I suppose it's all old stuff to you. If not, however, I want a credit in any paper that results.)

I started thinking about how my parents—as all parents do—complain that my recollections of childhood events are not accurate, that "it didn't happen that way." This actually occurs quite a lot because my fannish essays generally evolve from or exaggerate real life experiences, and I have often shared these essays with family members. (I follow—to a point—the fannish commandment, "Thou shalt provide free copies of your pub to those you mention within." I don't, however, plan to send mom a copy of the article I gave Stu Shiffman several years ago—if it ever sees print—entitled "Moootherrrrr—!") Anyway, I've been alternately amused and horrified by how effectively a well-told or written rendition of an event actually rewrites the memory in my head. As I get older, I wonder just what percentage of my life as I know it is actually fiction!

But, you know, given the utter impossibility of preventing this memory-rewriting, maybe it's a *good*, survival-enhancing mechanism of the brain. Anything an organism can't help doing must be pretty deeply programmed, right? Maybe a person is mentally healthy to the extent that they are able to re-write the memory text of their experience which in turn, helps them to handle similar experiences in the future or simply to cope with the past events themselves. Maybe traumatic events aren't harmful to mental health in and of themselves: maybe just as important is how the brain chooses to remember them. If it does not effectively re-write the experience as a coherent segment of an image of a healthy person, the individual does not recover from the experience. But if the memory is re-written in such a way to allow the individual to perceive themselves as a healthy person, they are able to recover. Maybe a good therapy for some people would be to help them write a fictional revision of the event, maybe with only slight exaggerations or changes in point-of-view, that the patient would then repeat several times to themselves, to strangers, and finally to loved ones...until that memory replaced the original one...

I used to be a painfully shy, introverted child, but I changed that in college by pretending to be an outgoing, assertive, self-assured woman to the new people I met when I moved to Madison from Milwaukee. I was astonished at how quickly the pretense turned into an unfeigned, honest persona. Part of the process, of becoming a different person—I'm sure—was the way I retold my history to the new people around me, omitting the autobiographical details about my shy personality, telling events or describing relationships as they might have occurred to a not-shy, not self-deprecating person. As I convinced them, I convinced myself.

On the other hand, if one believes that "nice" people are never proud of themselves, and tend to make lots of self-deprecating comments about themselves, I suppose one could end up re-writing one's self image so that one was forever doomed to be stupid, incompetent or a failure.

We all probably re-write our childhoods, our young adulthoods, etc. through the perception of ourselves as we perceive ourselves *now*. That may be a mechanism of mental health (or sickness, depending on the manner one uses it). Most people dislike going home for large chunks of time because we tend to return to behaviors that we "grew out of"—Our families tend to freeze their memories

of us from the last time they lived with us, and their expectations of us encourage us to return to those behaviors. In my case, that's definitely backsliding—I become argumentative, often sullen, not a nice person. I wonder if adulthood, separation from one's parents, or separation from a lover, a divorced spouse, whatever, comes about because our recollections of a shared past no longer match with one another: we have defined ourselves anew and that description no longer matches the other person's. We are able to move on, grow up, or—if the process wasn't intentional—we fall “out of love,” and the relationship crumbles.

## PAT HARIO

(JG) You do very entertaining bureaucratise, Pat. And you've got my vote. See the Official Business section.

I'm with you all the way about not wanting to go public with bare breasts. (However, I seem to do it all the time in my dreams: I'm riding the elevator up to my office and I suddenly realize that I've forgotten to put on a bra or a shirt. I sort of casually cross my arms and try to appear nonchalant.) But then, I'm the sort of person that hates to wear costumes, or actually any really flamboyant clothing. I prefer not to deal with people perceiving me through a “costume;” I dislike disguising myself. I don't mind being the center of attention for who I am or for what I say, but I dislike it intensely when it is for what I look like. But clearly, there are lots of people who handle that variety of attention with aplomb, even delight, and I stand behind them 100% in their right to dress or not dress the way they like.

Wearing jeans to an interview has its consequences and it's wise to understand that one makes a statement with one's attire (or lack of such) whether it's an intentional statement or merely a misunderstood one. If one wants to deal with people in a way that minimizes misunderstanding, it's best to dress in an expected, socially approved way, but the mere fact that there are benefits to dressing in a conventional manner shouldn't—in my mind—require conventional attire. There are times when one doesn't care about appeasing other people's sense of appropriateness... Extreme heat or cold—neither of which are known here in Madison, of course—tend to erode the importance of fashion dictates. (“Who cares if it's ugly—give me my muckluks, parka, and wool scarf wound around my face like a mummy. It's warm!”)

So I think women who want to go topless ought to be left alone. The guys who oggle them deserve sneers, which I am more than willing to supply. What bothers me about the whole controversy is that women's breasts are being talked about as if they were weirdly powerful in a negative way, “causing” men to do or say ugly things, or that our breasts are “property” of individual men who are alone legally entitled to view them. It is, after all, just our own little cultural peccadillo. Lots of other cultures fail to identify the female breast as “private;” while other cultures identify other parts as sexually provocative, that we would consider absurdly mundane (like the face, legs or ankles).

(SC) Of course women and men should be allowed to go topless on the beach. But really, shouldn't we carry this discussion out to the logical end? In a free society, shouldn't everyone be allowed to go to the beach naked if they wish? Why should

the simple display of any part of one's body be automatically off limits? I think a good case could be made for banning sex acts on the beach. But I think it's silly to ban nudity completely. It has long been true that teasing, provocative swimsuits can be more sexually arousing than simple nudity. Why allow string bikinis, for example, which are all about sexual stimulation, and disallow nudity which can often be a sexual turn-off? If someone has a great body, they will attract attention regardless of whether they are wearing a swimsuit. What's really the difference?

You're asking me to compare Texas to Iowa? The Gobbi Desert to the Garden of Eden?

(JG) I think you're getting into a different can of worms here, Scott. First of all, I wasn't limiting my discussion to the beach, but even so, I think we would have to talk about the current, cultural situation, in which one very real form of sexual attack of women by men is exposure. As long as exposure of male genitalia to women in public places is used as a form of attack, the issue doesn't remain one of clothing aesthetics, or even morality. It gets into the area of safety.

## OWEN WHEATLY

(JG) Lovely story that was about your school outing to the mountain, and a lot more impressive than the field trips I remember from my school days—the cottage cheese factory, the mushroom farm, museums, state parks...

## CATHY ARBUTHNOTT

(JG) What a nightmare this Centre for Policy Studies is. Unfortunately it feels as if we're involved in a nationwide nightmare here in this country. It just keeps getting worse and we can't seem to wake up. The Supreme Court (in what the leftist press is calling the “Conservative Juggernaut”) is engaged in negating our Bill of Rights; protest is called traitorous; and demands for privacy seem to be equated with guilt by our conservative power elite. As for women participating and promoting their own victimization, read *GynEcology* by Mary Daly. She draws some really horrifying historical parallels to this phenomenon: Women have often been encouraged to do the PR for many laws or customs that hurt women and benefit men. Women were in charge of binding young girls' feet in China. Women urged widows to leap onto their dead husbands' funeral pyres in India. To this day, women cut off the clitorises of their own daughters in many parts of Africa (“female circumcision”). And western mothers teach their daughters they must wear make-up, high heels and pretend to be less intelligent than prospective husbands.

(SC) Who is Mrs. Susan Soros? Who is her husband?

## ALISON DAWSON

(SC) Fabulous zine. I really enjoyed it. The cartoon and descriptions of your friends were funny, but I realized that I would like to see you and James for real (or at least pictures). We'd love some photos.

I did a shirt-tail analysis of your handwriting and have concluded a) you are not an axe-wielding maniac, b) if a certain lover (who shall remain nameless) does not take good care of you, you are likely to flee to the American Midwest, start



wearing funny hats and cowboy boots and drinking tasteless American beer!

## NEVENAH SMITH

(SC) Loved your zine.

## KATHRYN BETH WILLIG

(SC) I was hoping I would have seen the Ellison article before having to respond to your comment. If you would send it to me I would appreciate it and promise a fuller comment later. In the meantime, I want to point to Vijay's comment to Tracy last month as being insightful on the subject of Ellison's motives.

## TRACY SHANNON

(JG) I really enjoyed your comments to **Kim Nash**, **Kim Winz**, and **Pat Harlo**, not to mention the "Stupid Thing" lino. I'm sure I could add a few to the "Stupid Thing" series, but I'm afraid I'm far into the triple digits by now.

(SC) I liked your whole zine. The driving essay was fun. My father used to be a very good driver (he used to sell feed on the road), but as he has gotten older, his driving has deteriorated. He's overconfident. I like to say that he drives like someone who has never had an accident. He's had a few very minor mishaps, but he has never experienced the cold gut-wrenching fear of being in a totally out-of-control spin-out and crash. Like I did. More than once. I'm a very careful driver now. *He* makes *me* nervous.

On the issue of Bingo and casino gambling by Indians: The Indians have been badly treated by the government. They were herded on to reservations, chosen because the land was worthless. Government support has been sufficient to keep them from starving but economically crippled and dependent. The Indians have had access to few resources to trade and there has been little interest from business in investment. So how do the tribes keep their separate identity without means to generate money? A few tribes in the Southwest got lucky and discovered oil and minerals on their reservations. There isn't much "work" involved in generating money this way, but few of us could blame them for taking advantage of this good fortune. Well what is the difference between this tactic and using their status as independent entities to open gambling halls and "mining" money from the surrounding greedy white man? Outrage over Indian gambling has nothing to do with morality or fairness. It's just the same old white greed and envy of the Indian. White folks want a piece of the action (or all of the action).

## ALISON BRON

(SC) Can't wait to hear how your piano test turned out. Your typewriter runs on batteries?  
Great comment to Ross.

## JAMES BRON

(SC) GREAT TO HEAR FROM YOU AGAIN JAMES!!!  
EVEN IF IT WAS A LOT OF CAPS AND EXCLAMATION POINTS!!!

## HOPE KIEFER

(SC) *Deathnotes* was an excellent response to the nasty tone of comments you've been receiving lately. I agree with you that the elimination of mailing agents makes very little sense. I believe that **Kim Nash** intended to reduce the likelihood of another **Peacock** mess and felt that taking over mailing agent duties would simplify things. I feel that the decision to drop John was not as easy for Kim as you are assuming. He did not decide immediately and he has been under almost constant criticism ever since. A significant portion of that criticism has come from us. In view of all that has happened, I'm not at all sure Kim would drop John again if he had the chance to do it over. Eliminating mailing agents might be his solution to avoiding this sort of problem in the future. I say again that I don't think it is a good solution, but I must give him credit for trying to act in the best interests of the Apa.

Looking forward to seeing you on the 21st. It's been a long time and I miss you.

(JG) I'm a bit more sympathetic to **Kim Nash's** decision to ax the mailing agents than is Scott, but I thought your sarcastic comparison of the mailing agent decision to a theoretical deliver-your-zine-by-bus rule had some truth to it. I feel, however, that logic plays only a minor part in the manner people chose to organize their lives: I feel no more qualified to nag people who fail to alphabetize their spices, than I do to demand that Kim take care of apa administrative details in a manner to suit me.

Bizarro political ad. Where'd you get it? I found myself arguing to a piece of paper—your zine—after I'd read it: "Sure, the earth can survive big disasters; the question is, can life? Or can our life? Like, what about the big disaster the earth survived when it switched to an oxygen atmosphere? Do these bozos think we can survive something like that?"

## STEVE SWARTZ

(SC) Wow! A cornucopia of comments! So much thought! So much analysis! I think I'm going to have a melt-down! Aaaaaaah...

Sorry about that. I've been hacking away at comments for quite a while and your excellent zine I saved for last. I hope I'm not too tired to be coherent (or at least no less coherent than usual). Nice to see someone finally commented back to us in our own style, right down to switching typefaces.

I agree that Islam and democracy probably couldn't co-exist in a society as you defined it last month. If the majority firmly believed in their religion strongly enough to accept such stringent conditions, they probably would be threatened by a minority exercising greater freedoms under the constitution. People have to do more than believe in democratic principals, they have to act on them. Most Americans would probably readily admit that they believe in democratic principals. But how many of them vote? Voting isn't much work. It only takes a few minutes to trudge down to the polls and pull the switches. The work is keeping up with the news. Deciding who to vote for. Weighing the issues. Much easier to sit it all out and then complain about how fucked up the system is. People complain there are no real choices and they are right, but they have to force the system to work. Too many Americans today are lazy, apathetic or ignorant about politics and the system and their own responsibility for making it run.

Years ago, I used to hear all the time how television was going to bring America "together." TV would help to erase our "diversity" and we would be one big family, with more characteristics in common than ever before. I don't think that's happened. I think our differences are deeper and more resistant than that. Instead of making us more alike, TV has shown us just how different, and sometimes alien, we are from each other. Before TV, people in one part of the country, say the Midwest, might have known New Yorkers were different somehow, but since few Midwesterners traveled to New York, they never really realized just *how* different they were. TV shows us every night how terrifying and foreign New York is. New Yorkers might be Americans, but not like us. I was thinking that maybe that was part of the popularity of the Iraq War. It was something that pulled most of America together for once. It was something that Americans had in common and most felt strongly in favor of. Maybe Americans yearn for more things in common. Even if it's war.

I think it would be a bad idea to turn education over to the private sector no matter how you passed out the money. I'm in favor of going the other way. I think we should ban private schools for kids under high school age. Make them all go to public school. That would insure that every caring parent in America, regardless of income level, would get involved with improving education. There would be a level playing field because everyone has an equal vote electing school board members. Property taxes are collected fairly based on ability to pay.

You're not likely to find too many liberals stumping for downsizing/decentralizing government. The reason is that most of them equate that with deregulating and privatizing. That has been the ruinous trend we've been following for over ten years. It has screwed up countless industries and plunged us into near economic ruin. At best I consider myself a fringe liberal. I still think socialism is a good idea.

(JG) An excellent (but terrifyingly accurate) summary of current US education

I suppose I could start proudly calling myself a "post-feminist" (= feminist+) but if that caught on, I'd be willing to bet that there would be a backlash against that name too, and the same people who are worried about "offending" men now would be backpedaling on that new name. It's not the specific word I worry about losing, it's the things it stands for. But I'm convinced that the battle is half lost if we give up the word—out of tact, embarrassment or misunderstanding. Furthermore, I dislike the implicit meaning of the word "post-feminist." It seems to imply a thing or a time after feminism is *over and finished*.

Congratulations on your DisClave bake sale. You win; I grovel at your feet (though I did hear that you sort of cheated by going home Friday night for a little clandestine baking). Enjoy your moment in the sun (or oven?) while it lasts. ChiCon's bake sale (organized by Karen Babich) may humble you Eastern upstarts!

The god-drawings were all cribbed from famous Roman statues portraying the characters in their most famous poses—which (it's not *my* fault) apparently reveal a Roman preference for naked guys. What do you mean the women aren't doing anything? Apollo is showing off his catch and Athena is showing off her Rubber Stamp of Power. Atlas is shouldering his workload and Artemis is wading through complex computer problems.

We agree on the way people use channeling, astrology, isms, literature, etc...

My comments weren't intended to be read as criticisms of how people use these things to make connections for themselves. I was really trying to defend Steve's interest in channeling as a useful tool in spite of the fact that I hold skeptical opinions about what channeling is purported to be—communication with other-dimensional beings. We agree that any method which illuminates or helps us to understand ourselves better, provides—by that capacity—an excellent reason for use. Sorry, you'll get no argument from me.

Great zine, Steve. I wished, while reading it, that your zine had been taking place verbally, at a party, say, which I was attending, and that I could have been involved, at least tangentially in all the conversations. I wouldn't have necessarily contributed a lot to each subject, but I wanted to be there. Your zine this issue is what I like the very best about being in an apa. Thanks. Both of us look forward to more conversation with you in Chicago.

By the way, take care of **Hope**. Now that she's converted from my acolyte to your's, you've inherited a big responsibility.

## KAREN BABICH

(JG) Thanks for the thought (cheese cake), but I don't think **Laura Spliss** would approve of either the **Bron** or the **Swartz** preservation method.

For ChiCon's bake sale, I'm planning on bringing lots of Tiptree posters (perhaps updated with news of WisCon's choice as site for the first award ceremony). What else would you like us Madisonians to do (besides bake)?

## VIJAY BOWEN

(JG) I think your suggestion of what to do about the Neo-Tokyo group (i.e., offer them use of SF<sup>3</sup>'s not-for-profit status, but no staff help) is an excellent one. But I doubt that they'd take us up on it. They seem to think that a local con is their right, not something they should actually have to work for.

(SC) I have not seen *School Daze* or *Mo' Betta Blues*, but *Do The Right Thing* was sensational. We plan to see *Jungle Fever* soon.

## EVERYONE

(JG) There will be a sort of double party Sunday night at WorldCon, hosted by Scott and I, in the connected rooms of a rather large number of turboapans who are arranging with the hotel for a line of rooms for this very purpose. The first half of this double party will be a 40th birthday party for me; the second half will be a more generally advertised WisCon party. You are all, of course, invited to both parts. SF<sup>3</sup> is donating money for soda; a few Madison people have offered to help with buying and/or arranging for muchies, and Scott and I will be bringing some treats. Any assistance in any of these areas—donations of food or money, help with delivery of soda from Scott's and my car to the hotel room, slicing and chopping of vegetable muchies before the parties, etc.—will be cheerfully accepted.

# MEDIA GOES WILDING IN PALM BEACH

KATHA POLLITT

I drink, I swear, I flirt, I tell dirty jokes. I have also, at various times, watched pornographic videos, had premarital sex, hitchhiked, and sunbathed topless in violation of local ordinances. True, I don't have any speeding tickets, but I don't have a driver's license either. Perhaps I'm subconsciously afraid of my "drives"? There are other things, too, and if I should ever bring rape charges against a rich, famous, powerful politician's relative, *The New York Times* will probably tell you all about them—along with, perhaps, my name. Suitably adorned with anonymous quotes, these revelations will enable you, the public, to form your own opinion: Was I asking for trouble, or did I just make the whole thing up?

In April the media free-for-all surrounding the alleged rape of a Palm Beach woman by William Smith, Senator Ted Kennedy's nephew, took a vicious turn as the *Times*—following NBC, following the *Globe* (supermarket, not Boston, edition), following a British scandal sheet, following another British scandal sheet—went public with the woman's name, and a lot more: her traffic violations, her mediocre high school grades, her "little wild streak," her single motherhood, her mother's divorce and upwardly mobile remarriage. Pretty small potatoes, really; she sounds like half my high school classmates. But it did make a picture: bad girl, loose woman, floozy.

Or did it? In a meeting with more than 300 outraged staff members, national editor Soma Golden said that the *Times* could not be held responsible for "every weird mind that reads [the paper]." NBC News chief Michael Gartner was more direct: "Who she is is material in this. . . . You try to give viewers as many facts as you can and let them make up their minds." Forget that almost none of these "facts" will be admissible in court, where a jury will nonetheless be expected to render a verdict.

In the ensuing furor, just about every advocate for rape victims has spoken out in favor of preserving the longstanding media custom of anonymity, and in large part the public seems to agree. But the media, acting in its capacity as the guardian of public interest, has decided that naming the victim is an issue up for grabs. And so we are having one of those endless, muddled, two-sides-to-every-question debates that, by ignoring as many facts as possible and by weighing all arguments equally, gives us that warm American feeling that truth must lie somewhere in the middle. Anna Quindlen, meet Alan Dershowitz. Thank you very much, but our time is just about up.

Sometimes, of course, the truth does lie somewhere in the middle. But not this time. There is no good reason to publish the names of rape complainants without their consent, and many compelling reasons not to. The arguments advanced in favor of publicity reveal fundamental misconceptions about both the nature of the media and the nature of rape.

Let's take a look at what proponents of naming are saying.

§ *The media has a duty to report what it knows.* Where have you been? The media keeps information secret all the time. Sometimes it does so on the ground of "taste," a waffle-word that means whatever an editorial board wants it to mean. Thus, we hear about (some of) the sexual high jinks of heterosexual celebrities but not about those of socially equivalent closet-dwellers, whose opposite-sex escorts are portrayed, with knowing untruthfulness, as genuine romantic interests. We are spared—or deprived of, depending on your point of view—the gruesome and salacious details of many murders. (Of all the New York dailies, only *Newsday* reported that notorious Wall Street wife-killer Joseph Pikul was wearing women's underwear when arrested. Not fit to print? I was riveted.) Sometimes it fudges the truth to protect third parties from embarrassment, which is why the obituaries would have us believe that eminent young bachelors are dying in large numbers only from pneumonia.

And of course sometimes it censors itself in "the national interest." The claim that the media constitutes a fourth estate, a permanent watchdog, if not outright adversary, of the government, has always been a self-serving myth. Watergate

\*I use "media" in the singular (rather than the strictly grammatical plural) because I am talking about the communications industry as a social institution that, while hardly monolithic (as the debate over naming shows), transcends the different means—"media" plural—by which the news is conveyed.

occurred almost twenty years ago and has functioned ever since as a kind of sentimental talisman, like Charles Foster Kane's Rosebud sled. As we saw during the gulf war, the media can live, when it chooses, quite comfortably with government-imposed restrictions. Neither NBC nor *The New York Times*, so quick to supply their audiences with the inside scoop on the Palm Beach woman, felt any such urgency about Operation Desert Storm.

§ *Anonymous charges are contrary to the American way.* Anonymous charges are contrary to American jurisprudence. The Palm Beach woman has not made an anonymous accusation. Her name is known to the accused and his attorney, and if the case comes to trial, she will have to appear publicly in court, confront the defendant, give testimony and be cross-examined. But the media is not a court, as the many lawyers who have made this argument—most prominently Alan Dershowitz and Isabelle Pinzler of the American Civil Liberties Union's Women's Rights Project—ought to know.

The media itself argues in favor of anonymity when that serves its own purposes. Reporters go to jail rather than reveal their sources, even when secrecy means protecting a dangerous criminal, impeding the process of justice or denying a public figure the ability to confront his or her accusers. People wouldn't talk to reporters, the press claims, if their privacy couldn't be guaranteed—the same greater-social-good argument it finds unpersuasive when made about rape victims and their reluctance to talk, unprotected, to the police. The media's selective interest in concealment, moreover, undermines its vaunted mission on behalf of the public's right to know. Might not the identity of an anonymous informant (one of those "sources close to the White House" or "highly placed observers," for instance) help the public "make up its mind" about the reliability of the statements? I don't want to digress here into the complex issue of protecting sources, but there can be little question that the practice allows powerful people, in and out of government, to manipulate information for their own ends. Interestingly, the *Times* story on the Palm Beach woman concealed (thirteen times!) the names of those spreading malicious gossip about her, despite the *Times*'s own custom of not using anonymous pejoratives. That custom was resuscitated in time for the paper's circumpect profile of William Smith, which did not detail the accusations against him of prior acquaintance rapes that have been published by *The National Enquirer* and the gossip columnist Taki, and which referred only vaguely to "rumors" of "a pattern of aggressiveness toward women in private." (These, the *Times* said, it could not confirm—unlike the accuser's "little wild streak.")

How did the *Times* manage to amass such a wealth of dirt about the Palm Beach woman so quickly? It's hard to picture the reporter, distinguished China hand Fox Butterfield, peering into the window of her house to see what books were on her toddler's shelf. Could some of his information or some of his leads have come, directly or circuitously, from the detectives hired by the Kennedy family to investigate the woman and her friends—detectives who, let's not forget, have been the subject of complaints of witness intimidation? The *Times* denies it, but rumors persist. One could argue that, in this particular case, how the *Times* got the story was indeed part of the story—perhaps the most important part.

That anonymity is held to be essential to the public good in a wide variety of cases but is damned as a form of censorship in the Palm Beach case shows that what the media is concerned with is not the free flow of information or the public good. What is at stake is the media's status, power and ability to define and control information in accordance with the views of those who run the media.

Consider, for example, the case of men convicted of soliciting prostitutes. Except for the occasional athlete, such men receive virtual anonymity in the press. Remember the flap in 1979 when Manhattan D.A. Robert Morgenthau released a list of recently convicted johns and the *Daily News* and two local radio stations went public with it? Universal outrage! Never mind that solicitation is a crime, that convictions are a matter of public record, that the wives and girlfriends of these men might find knowledge of such arrests extremely useful or that society has a declared interest in deterring prostitution. Alan Dershowitz, who in his syndicated column has defended both the content of the *Times* profile and its use of the woman's name, vigorously supported privacy for johns, and in fact made some of the same arguments that he now dismisses. Reporting, he said, was vindictive, subjected ordinary people to the glaring light of publicity for a peccadillo, could destroy the johns' marriages and reputations, and stigmatized otherwise decent people. Dershowitz did not, however, think privacy for johns meant privacy for prostitutes: They, he argued, have no reputation to lose. Although solicitation is a two-person crime, Dershowitz thinks the participants have unequal rights to privacy. With rape, he treats the rapist and his victim as equally placed with regard to privacy, even though rape is a one-person crime.

§ *But here the woman's identity was already widely known.* Well, I didn't know it. I did, however, know the name of the Central Park jogger—like virtually every other journalist in the country, the entire readership of *The Amsterdam News* (50,000) and the listening audience of WLIB radio (45,000). Anna Quindlen, in her courageous column dissenting from the *Times*'s profile naming the Palm Beach woman, speculated that roughly equivalent large numbers of people knew the identity of the jogger as knew that of William Smith's alleged victim before NBC and the *Times* got into the act. Yet the media went to extraordinary lengths to protect the remaining shreds of the jogger's privacy—film clips were blipped, quotes censored.

What separates the jogger from the Palm Beach woman? You don't have to be the Rev. Al Sharpton to suspect that protecting the jogger's identity was more than a chivalrous gesture. Remember that she too was originally blamed for her assault: What was she doing in the park so late? Who did she think she was? It's all feminism's fault for deluding women into thinking that their safety could, or should, be everywhere guaranteed. But partly as a result of the severity of her injuries, the jogger quickly became the epitome of the innocent victim, the symbol, as Joan Didion pointed out in *The New York Review of Books*, for New York City itself (white, prosperous, plucky) endangered by the black underclass. A white Wellesley graduate with a Wall Street job attacked out of nowhere by a band of violent black strangers and, because of her comatose state, unable even to bring a rape complaint—this, to the media, is "real rape." The Palm Beach woman, on the other hand, is of working-class origins, a single mother, a frequenter of bars, who went voluntarily to her alleged attacker's house (as who, in our star-struck society, would not?). The jogger could have been the daughter of the men who kept her name out of the news. But William Smith could have been their son.

§ *Rape is like other crimes and should be treated like other crimes.* Isn't that what you feminists are always saying? As the coverage of the Palm Beach case proves, rape isn't treated like other crimes. There is no other crime in which the character, behavior and past of the complainant are seen as central elements in determining whether a crime has occurred. There are lots of crimes that could not take place without carelessness, naïveté, ignorance or bad judgment on the part of the victims: mail fraud ("Make \$100,000 at home in your spare time!"), confidence games and many violent crimes as well. But when my father was burglarized after forgetting to lock the cellar door, the police did not tell him he had been asking for it. And when an elderly lady (to cite Amy Pagnozzi's example in the *New York Post*) is defrauded of her life savings by a con artist, the con artist is just as much a thief as if he'd broken into his victim's safe-deposit box. "The complainant showed incredibly bad judgment, Your Honor," is not a legal defense.

Why is rape different? Because lots of people, too often including the ones in the jury box, think women really do want to be forced into sex, or by acting or dressing or drinking in a certain way, give up the right to say no, or are the sort of people (i.e., not nuns) who gave up the right to say no to one man by saying yes to another, or are by nature scheming, irrational and crazy. They also think men cannot be expected to control themselves, are entitled to take by force what they cannot get by persuasion and are led on by women who, because they are scheming, irrational and crazy, change their minds in mid-sex. My files bulge with stories that show how widespread these beliefs are: the Wisconsin judge who put a child molester on probation because he felt the 3-year-old female victim had acted provocatively; the Florida jury that exonerated a rapist because his victim was wearing disco attire; and so on.

In a bizarre column defending Ted Kennedy's role on the night in question, William Safire took aim at the Palm Beach woman, who was "apparently" not "taught that drinking all night and going to a man's house at 3:30 A.M. places one in what used to be called an occasion of sin." (All her mother's fault, as usual.) The other woman present in the Kennedy mansion that night, a waitress named Michelle Cassone, has made herself a mini-celebrity by telling any reporter who will pay for her time that she too believes that women who drink and date, including herself, are "fair game."

By shifting the debate to the question of merely naming victims the media pre-empts a discussion of the way it reports all crimes with a real or imaginary sexual component. But as the *Times* profile shows, naming cannot be divorced from blaming. When the victim is young and attractive (and in the tabloids all female victims are attractive), the sexual element in the crime is always made its central feature—even when, as in the case of Marla Hanson, the model who was slashed by hired thugs and whose character was savaged in *New York*, there is no sexual element. I mean no belittlement of rape to suggest it was one of the lesser outrages visited on the Central Park jogger. She was also beaten so furiously she lost 80 percent of her blood and suffered permanent physical, neuro-



logical and cognitive damage. Yet, paradoxically, it was the rape that seized the imagination of the media, and that became the focus of the crime both for her defenders and for those who defended her attackers.

§ *Naming rape victims will remove the stigma against rape.* Of all the arguments in favor of naming victims, this is the silliest, and the most insincere. Sure, NBC's Michael Gartner told *Newsweek*, the consequences will be "extraordinarily difficult for this generation, but it may perhaps help their daughters and granddaughters." How selfish of women to balk at offering themselves on the altar of little girls yet unborn! If Gartner wishes to make a better world for my descendants, he is amply well placed to get cracking. He could demand non-sensationalized reporting of sex crimes; he could hire more female reporters and producers; he could use NBC News to dispel false notions about rape—for example, the idea that "who the woman is is material." Throughout the country there are dozens of speakouts against rape at which victims publicly tell of their experiences. Every year there are Take Back the Night marches in Manhattan. Where are the cameras and the reporters on these occasions? Adding misery to hundreds of thousands of women a year and—as just about every expert in the field believes—dramatically lowering the already abysmal incidence of rape reporting (one in ten) will not help my granddaughter; it will only make it more likely that her grandmother, her mother and she herself will be raped by men who have not been brought to justice.

This argument is, furthermore, based on a questionable assumption. Why would society blame rape victims less if it knew who they were? Perhaps its censure would simply be amplified. Instead of thinking, "If ordinary, decent, conventional women get raped in large numbers it can't be their fault, people might well think, Goodness, there are a lot more women asking for it than we thought. After the invasion of Kuwait, in which scores of women were raped by Iraqi soldiers, there was no dispensation from the traditional harsh treatment of rape victims, some of whom, pregnant and in disgrace, had attempted suicide, gone into hiding or fled the country. One woman told *USA Today* that she wished she were dead. America is not Kuwait, but here, too, many believe that a woman can't be raped against her will and that damaged goods are damaged goods. (Curious how publicity is supposed to lessen the stigma against rape victims but only adds to the suffering of Johns.)

One also has to wonder about the urgency with which Gartner and the other male proponents of the anti-stigma theory, with no history of public concern for women, declare themselves the best judge of women's interests and advocate a policy that they themselves will never have to bear the consequences of. Gartner cited, as did many others, the *Des Moines Register* profile of a named rape victim but neglected to mention that the victim, Nancy Ziegenmeyer, volunteered the use of her name, seven months after reporting the crime—in other words, after she had had a chance to come to terms with her experience and to inform her family and friends in a way she found suitable. (Ziegenmeyer, by the way, opposes involuntary naming.) Why is it that, where women are concerned, the difference between choice and coercion eludes so many? Rapists, too, persuade themselves that they know what women really want and need.

§ *William Smith's name has been dragged through the mud. Why should his accuser be protected?* Actually, William Smith has been portrayed rather favorably in the media. No anonymous pejoratives for him: He is "one of the least spoiled and least arrogant of the young Kennedys" (*Time*); an "unlikely villain" (*Newsweek*); "a man of gentleness and humor," "the un-Kennedy," "a good listener" (*The New York Times*); from a "wounded," "tragic" family (*passim*). Certainly he has been subjected to a great deal of unpleasant media attention, and even if he is eventually found innocent, some people will always suspect that he is guilty. But no one forced the media to sensationalize the story; that was a conscious editorial decision, not an act of God. Instead of heaping slurs on the Palm Beach woman in order to even things up, the media should be asking itself why it did not adopt a more circumspect attitude toward the case from the outset.

The tit-for-tat view of rape reporting appeals to many people because of its apparent impartiality. Feminists of the pure equal-treatment school like it because it looks gender neutral (as if rape were a gender-neutral crime). And nonfeminist men like it because, while looking gender neutral, it would, in practice, advantage men. "Should the press be in the business of protecting certain groups but not others—," wrote *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen, "alleged victims (females), but not the accused (males)? My answer is no." Cohen, like Michael Gartner, presents himself as having

women's best interests at heart: "If rape's indelible stigma is ever to fade, the press has to stop being complicitous in perpetuating the sexist aura that surrounds it." Thus, by some mysterious alchemy, the media, which is perhaps the single biggest promoter of the sexist aura surrounding crimes of violence against women, can redeem itself by jettisoning the only policy it has that eases, rather than augments, the victim's anguish.

Behind the tit-for-tat argument lies a particular vision of rape in which the odds are even that the alleged victim is really the victimizer—a seductress, blackmailer, hysteric, who is bringing a false charge. That was the early word on the Palm Beach woman, and it's hard not to conclude that publicizing her identity was punitive: She's caused all this trouble, is visiting yet more "tragedy" on America's royal family, and had better be telling the truth. In fact, the appeal of naming the victim seems to rest not in the hope that it "may perhaps" someday make rape reporting less painful but in the certainty that right now it makes such reporting more painful, thereby inhibiting false accusations. Although studies have repeatedly shown that fabricated rape charges are extremely rare, recent years have seen a number of cases: Tawana Brawley, for example, and Cathleen Crowell Webb, who recanted her testimony after finding Jesus and then hugged her newly freed, no-longer-alleged-assailant on the *Donahue* show. A year ago a Nebraska woman who admitted filing a false charge was ordered by a judge to purchase newspaper ads and radio spots apologizing to the man she had accused. (She was also sentenced to six months in jail.) It is not unknown for other criminal charges to be fabricated, but has anyone ever been forced into a public apology in those cases? The tenor of the equal-publicity argument is captured perfectly by the (female) letter writer to *Time* who suggested that newspapers publish both names and both photos too. Why not bring back trial by ordeal and make the two of them grasp bars of red-hot iron?

Fundamentally, the arguments about naming rape victims center around two contested areas: acquaintance rape and privacy. While the women's movement has had some success in expanding the definition of rape to include sexual violation by persons known to the victim—as I write, *The New York Times* is running an excellent series on such rape, containing interviews with women named or anonymous by their choice (atonement?)—there is also a lot of backlash.

The all-male editorial board of the *New York Post*, which rather ostentatiously refused to print the Palm Beach woman's name, has actually proposed a change in the law to distinguish between "real rape" (what the jogger suffered) and acquaintance rape, confusedly described as a "sexual encounter, forced or not," that "has been preceded by a series of consensual activities." *Forced or not?*

At the other end of the literary social scale, there's Camille (No Means Yes) Paglia, academia's answer to Phyllis Schlafly, repackaging hoary myths about rape as a bold dissent from feminist orthodoxy and "political correctness." Indeed, an attack on the concept of acquaintance rape figures prominently in the many diatribes against current intellectual trends on campus. It's as though the notion of consensual sex were some

incomprehensible French literary theory that threatened the very foundations of Western Civ. And, come to think of it, maybe it does.

Finally, there is the issue of privacy. Supporters of naming like to say that anonymity implies that rape is something to be ashamed of. But must this be its meaning? It says a great deal about the impoverishment of privacy as a value in our time that many intelligent people can find no justification for it but shame, guilt, cowardice and prudishness. As the tabloidization of the media proceeds apace, as the boundaries between the public and the personal waver and fade away, good citizenship has come to require of more and more people that they put themselves forward, regardless of the cost, as exhibit A in a national civics lesson. In this sense, rape victims are in the same position as homosexuals threatened with "outing" for the good of other gays, or witnesses forced to give painful and embarrassing testimony in televised courtrooms so that the couch potatoes at home can appreciate the beauty of the legal process.

But there are lots of reasons a rape victim might not want her name in the paper that have nothing to do with shame. She might not want her mother to know, or her children, or her children's evil little classmates, or obscene phone callers, or other rapists. Every person reading this article probably has his or her secrets, things that aren't necessarily shameful (or things that are) but are liable to misconstructions, false sympathy and stupid questions from the tactless and ignorant. Things that are just plain nobody's business unless you want them to be.

Instead of denying privacy to rape victims, we should take a good hard look at our national passion for thrusting unwanted publicity on people who are not accused of wrongdoing but find themselves willy-nilly in the news. ("How did it feel to watch your child being torn to pieces by wild animals?" "It felt terrible, Maury, terrible.") I've argued here that society's attitudes toward rape justify privacy for rape complainants, and that indeed those attitudes lurk behind the arguments for publicity. But something else lurks there as well: a desensitization to the lurid and prurient way in which the media exploits the sufferings of any ordinary person touched by a noteworthy crime or tragedy. Most of the people who have spoken out against anonymity are journalists, celebrity lawyers, media executives and politicians—people who put themselves forward in the press and on television as a matter of course and who are used to taking their knocks as the price of national attention. It must be hard for such people to sympathize with someone who doesn't want to play the media game—especially if it's in a "good cause."

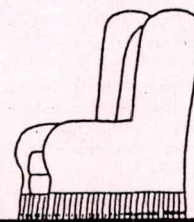
I'm not at all sure there is a good cause here. Titillation, not education, seems the likely reason for the glare on the Palm Beach case. But even if I'm unduly cynical and the media sincerely wishes to conduct a teach-in on rape, the interests of the public can be served without humiliating the complainant. Doctors educate one another with case histories in which patients are identified only by initials and in which other non-relevant identifying details are changed. Lawyers file cases on behalf of Jane Doe and John Roe and expect the Supreme Court to "make up its mind" nonetheless.

If the media wants to educate the public about rape, it can do so without names. What the coverage of the Palm Beach case shows is that it needs to educate itself first. □

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## AT HOME WITH THE NEW AGERS

HONEY, THE PUPPY HAD  
ANOTHER OUT-OF-BODY  
EXPERIENCE ON THE  
RUS.



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