

Union St

This is Union Street #4 and Obsessive Press #103 from the joint Turboapa members Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll, at 2825 Union Street, Madison, WI 53704-5136 (tel. 608-246-8857). It is produced with Microsoft Word, Aldus Freehand and Aldus Pagemaker on a Macintosh SE and IIx



with the assistance of Laserwriter IIINTX. Please attach this zine to the rest of the January issue of the #48: this is a Post-mailing. All material remains the property of the authors and artist. Copyright © 1990 by Jeanne Gomoll and Scott Custis. Members FWA.

As it happened, Scott had time to comment on *Turboapa* #40 and Jeanne had time to comment on #42, so the usual alternating comment form is dispensed with for this issue...

Here are Scott's mailing comments on *Turboapa* #40:41

ALGERNON STEWART

In case you didn't notice, OE Nash elected not to accept your letter of resignation from the APA. Instead he slapped your zine on a respirator and started performing CPR. I hope the operation is a success and you remain with us. If we have to wade through a few months of minac for another great zine, that's OK with me. Going into the pipeline as empty as it is right now would not provide you much of a respite anyway.

In all the dark, "evil" evenings I've been through over the years, it never struck me to grab my coat and head out into the night...to get my ear pierced. Maybe I'll try that next time instead of my usual solution.

KIM NASH

I can't think of many things that are conservative, tasteful, original and unusual all at once. But you brought up a good idea about earrings. Since reading your zine, I've kept an eye out for earrings that I thought I would feel comfortable wearing. I've perused jewelry departments under the excuse that I was looking for a Xmas gift for one of my nieces. Frankly I haven't had much luck. So, for the time being, this will serve as an excuse to avoid going through with it. Thanks. While you're at it, any ideas how I can rationalize not painting the guest room?

MARK WILLIAM RICHARDS

It has been something like ten years since I was last in New York City. NYC must have been the subject of the phrase "It's a great place to visit, but..." Seattle, on the other hand, has a real comfortable feel to it. When we were out there a year and a half ago, the weather was beautiful and the whole area seemed to be blooming. We talked a lot about moving ourselves. I think if we could just move anywhere in the country, Seattle would be high on our list. I would want to come up with some ironclad excuse for moving out there to give to my new neighbors however. From what I understand, Seattle natives are taking an increasingly dim view of outsiders moving in to their lovely city. I can't say as I blame them.

STEVE SWARTZ

Don't waste time writing up the "mailing comments you deserve" (a scary notion if I ever heard one!) Just concentrate on sending more material like *Wholly Shit* #6. I think I'll suggest to the OE that we start an APA fund with the object being to send you on a trip somewhere so you can write to us about it. In the meantime, take more walks. Long walks. Write about them. I've never been to Boston.

VIJAY BOWEN

I can't tackle all the issues you brought up in one short MC so for now I'll stick to your two general questions. Jeanne and I live together without benefit (?) of marriage in our big white house on Union St. We bought this place last February after about a six month search and fell-in-love-at-first-sight. It had four bedrooms until we converted two of them into one large master bedroom. One bedroom serves as an office for me and guest room, and the other bedroom is Jeanne's studio/office. We have a large kitchen, dining room, living room, two bathrooms, and a walk up attic. We have the place to ourselves, except for the occasional guest. We've talked about getting a dog at some point, but our schedules would not allow for enough time to devote to proper care. We both barely tolerate cats. I moved in with Jeanne two years ago. I lived alone for most of the previous twelve years. What can I say about it? It was great at times, lonely other times. Expensive. A lot of work, or less work, depending on how clean you like to live. I appreciated the privacy and control over my time and never once considered having a casual friend as a roommate. If Jeanne and I were to split, I would go back to living alone. I have not developed a need to share space with someone just for company.

CATHY GILLIGAN

Bravo again on a great trip report. The whole story was interesting and well written, but like many other readers, what stood out for me was the stove fire adventure. Of course we have a hundred questions about what happened afterward (damage?, fire department?, injuries? etc.) but I can understand your not wanting to dwell on the play-by-play details. The lack of details actually improves the story in this case. The trouble with writing great trip reports is that now we will be pleading with you to keep them coming. Not going anywhere soon? Maybe we can fix that (see comment to Swartz above). Thanks for the postcard.

KAREN BABICH

Welcome! You wrote such a good introduction for yourself that I wound up feeling rather guilty. I came into the Apa only a few months ago, started commenting to people right away, and never really got around to introducing myself. Your way is better. I will get around to doing it sometime, I'm sure, but not this month. You made some particularly interesting comments about music. I also have a broad taste in music, genre wise, that doesn't make much sense other than that I know what I like. I just don't know why.

JAMES BRON

I was struck by your friend's troubles with the police. Your account left me full of questions. He went to the police to report a theft and they accuse him of stealing his own money and make him confess? Hmm. How did they "bully" him into giving a guilty statement? What made them think he was guilty? Didn't he have a lawyer at some point? You might not be at liberty to go into details for us. After all, you were only mentioning why you were pissed off at the time you were writing. Still, if you can write more, I'd like to find out more.

ANDY HOOPER

Great cover. I particularly liked the back cover. Jeanne and I were discussing whether this was your creation or you picked it up somewhere. What's the story?

And here are Jeanne's mailing comments on *Turboapa* #4:42.

PETE WINZ

You know how sometimes when you've spent a long time and energy writing up something for the apa and then, the next month, you get a few comments seemingly from left field, responding to some off hand, peripheral remark? You know? (Maybe this should be a Laadan word, hm?) Well, you didn't do that. You sort of apologized for responding to my thought on the Gomoll trait of stoicism, but indeed that was to me a very central part of my experience in the last couple months and I appreciated hearing your reaction.

I also think damping emotional responses when they won't do any good can be a useful technique at times. A few times in the past, a doctor has found something suspicious things in the course of their examinations of my body, and have told me, "Don't worry about this until we get the test results back. It's probably nothing." Well, oddly enough, I don't worry. The doctors seem sort of freaked out when I return to their offices for the test results and report that I forgot about it over the weekend. At that point, I realize that the "don't worry," part was meant facetiously. They really meant "Don't don't drive yourself crazy worrying." They don't expect me to be able to put it aside totally.

But I'm rather glad that I can do it when I want to, and like you, I don't think there's a problem with that sort of coping mechanism unless stuff ends up getting bottled up all the time and never gets dealt with.

I chortled at your Byzantine response to Dick's proposals.

KIM WINZ

You talked about liking the African Storyteller course's coverage of women's difficult position in a male-dominated Islamic society, and that got me thinking. It reminded me of Suzette Haden Elgin's (and Hofstadter's) point that we view our society (and language) by its own definitions—that it's difficult, if not impossible to imagine a concept different than the ones we learned as children. We can read a story about men's domination of women in an Islamic culture and feel exasperated for those women: "Why do they put up with that? I wouldn't wear a veil, no not me!" And yet many of us question equally idiotic expectations in our own culture only later in life, and not frequently then. That's why I like feminist SF: it's a perfect vehicle for stretching the essential mental muscles necessary for questioning our society's traditions.

I like the story. (I've always loved time travel stories) though I expected a more wicked ending. ...Like after the boys kidnap Mr. Cooper, Mrs. Cooper finishes the work faster/better/cheaper (whatever), which causes a chain of events which results in the boys' birth's prevented by the more advanced technology. And then the boys disappear in a pool of planned parenthood before they get Mr. Cooper back to the future and float around for all eternity in a cosmic cloud of paradox.

JOHN PEACOCK

Sorry I threw the phrase "uncritical sycophant" around in your direction without justification. I agree with your review of the last 20 years of NASA politics vis-a-vis the military, but I stand firm on my expression of distaste for the tendency of many fans—myself included at times—to trust NASA far more than any other government agency. When one government agency tells us that the Nevada radioactive waste dump site will be completely safe for all time, most of us arch a cynical eyebrow skyward or, at least, tend to listen sympathetically to the dissenters. But when NASA says that the blastoff and all subsequent near-orbits of the Galileo mission will be perfectly safe, we SF fans—tasting the future in NASA's press releases—don't want to doubt their assurances. We desperately want to explore those planets and so the level of government distrust ebbs in our community with our desire for a future in which human beings explore and live in outer space.

And I do think there are reasons to doubt NASA's assurances, whether its subcontractor is the University of Wisconsin (or even you personally, John Peacock), or whether it is any other hired company. In fact in the very month you wrote your essay for the apa, there were several well-researched and convincing articles in *Nation* magazine. One described some very serious potential problems with the momentum-gaining low earth orbits later on in Galileo's flight plan. Another article pointed out that there were workable non-plutonium propulsion systems (specifically, solar powered systems) that had been rejected by NASA because the Military was interested in testing the plutonium drive for their Star Wars program.

STEVE SWARTZ

Wow. I'm really impressed by the depth of your

comments/mini letters! This is the sort of feedback and interaction I yearn for in apas but which so rarely happens. And not for flimsy reasons of course. Even the 4-pagers that Scott and I have been generating takes quite a bit of time, at least in proportion to the importance of the apa in our scheme of things. Being new to apas, and a perfectionist on top of it, Scott has been grumbling a bit lately about the surprising amount of time it takes. As for me, if we hadn't decided to limit ourselves artificially within these pages, I wouldn't have been able to justify the time.

You say to Bill Dyer that writing apa material for oneself is reason enough to do it. I say writing for oneself is reason enough, but writing apa material for oneself gets very lonely and burns one out in short order. Apas, to me, are first and foremost founded on the desire for intense communication among a group of people. To simply write for other people, one can do better by writing for publication—professional or a wide-circulation fanzine. If one wants to write for oneself, one can do so more economically by writing a journal, and get the same satisfaction. Anyway, I'm just saying writing for oneself isn't enough in an apa, and you don't seem to believe it either. You're hungry for other apas' thoughts too. And this zine, your *Wholly Shit #7* satisfies my hunger for meaty, thought-provoking interaction better than most apa zines I've received. Thank you.

Ironically, it's just that hunger and the cost of reciprocating that made it difficult for Scott and I to meet deadlines, even with our economical format...

Other things: I don't remember meeting you, sorry. I sometimes enter a performance mode—sort of—when I attend cons, and my observation skills deteriorate then.

Scott does want to write about his job; it's one of the things he joined the apa to do. And I agree with him, unfortunately, that his job is a great deal worse than any job I've heard any of you describing.

I wanted to comment in depth to quite a few of your comments to other apa members. Really. I can't say enough to you about how I appreciate and really enjoyed the energy you put into this zine. Scott and I have both raved to one another about it and your writing in general. Several topics—when you wrote to Don Helly about purposeful obtuseness, the whole letter on writing you addressed to Andy Hooper, and the stuff to Diane and to Kim Nash on jobs—could have sparked several pages of comments from me. But it will have to wait for an in person conversation. See you at WisCon!

HOPE KIEFER

Normally I'd agree with you about movies (or books) that leave the audience hanging. I usually hate that. But *Back to the Future, part 2* is an exception as far as I'm concerned. It's a really great puzzle really—a time-travel mind-twister—and the hints for what will happen in movie #3 are imbedded in movie #2. If I am wrong, and the several loose ends don't get artfully tied into lovely bows, I'll take back these words and grumble along with you, but I don't believe I will have to do that. My brother Dan, Scott, and I spent a delightful hour figuring a few things out, and if #3 ends up not making use of the devices we predict... well, then Dan, Scott, and I are damned clever and should write a time travel story! In any case, by splitting up

the story (into a whole story and two halves: #2 plus #3), the movie let me use my imagination and think through possible solutions to the puzzle—which is usually something I can only do with a book and is something I love to do with time travel stories. A movie tends to present the solution too quickly. So I'd have given the movie several more stars than you did Hope.

DICK RUSSELL

Amendments included, I'll still vote against all your proposed rule changes, Dick. And Scott does too. (As for proposal #4, obviously joint members share votes and therefore I have half a vote and Scott has half a vote. I don't think it needs a rule; it's implicit in the fact that we share a membership.) The same reasons I discussed in the last issue of *Union Street* still seem valid to me, so I will not use space going into specifics for each revised proposal. But I would like to write a bit about the philosophy on which my reasons are based.

We've danced around this discussion before, at least once that I remember when we argued about the value of hierarchy in the WisCon committees. But I hope that Diane and others who have written that they're interested in talking about job politics might read this as a comment hook on management techniques in general...

The last year in which I was deeply involved in WisCon, I joined what felt like a quixotic revolt against the growing bureaucratization of the convention and of the SF³ group. Some of us argued for an end to artificial hierarchies in WisCon. We said that volunteers should be allowed—even encouraged—to contribute what they *wanted to contribute*, rather than what others thought *ought to be done*. Some of us even made claims for the latent sexism in the hierarchical structure itself, saying it was a characteristic of patriarchal society.

I suspect it is that latter accusation which turned you off, and so I'd like to continue this discussion with you and others in the group without dealing with that hypothesis. (I still feel that I could make a case for the connection, but there are other, even simpler problems with hierarchical organization and those are the things I'd like to talk about here.) The last time some of us complained about the situation it felt to me that you never really tried to understand our criticisms and the very deep and real discomfort we felt about your organization charts and prolific bylaw-writing. It seemed to me that your response amounted to explaining yourself in a louder voice.

My leaving the Wiscon concomm has much more to do with far too many years of doing the same thing than it does with that last disagreement with you. I'm certainly not saying that you drove me away, Dick, though the lost battle certainly made it easier to exit. And I don't intend this to be read as a personal vendetta. I hope we continue to be friends for a long time: I admire your tolerance, sense of humor and amazing generosity. I just wouldn't like to be your employee.

But I'm bringing the argument up again because this latest bout of rule-proposing of yours in the *Turboapa* seems like another version of the same thing. And besides that, Diane's comment that her interests are more and more bound up with her job jive with my own as I've given more and more of my energy to a very satisfying job

at the DNR. I've come to a not surprising conclusion that a lot of the group dynamics of our volunteer, special interest group (SF³) exist in the salaried world too. I learned a lot through my experience in SF³—in fact I owe my job to the group—and I'm even more convinced now that the hierarchies and too many rules can stifle creativity and damn up the natural energy of a group of like-minded people who are highly motivated to cooperatively do a job.

As far as I'm concerned, strict hierarchies and lists of rules which cover every contingency are for prison inmates (and sometimes children) who are highly motivated to sabotage a system. Not for reasonable adults who have already agreed with one another to do a job, to put on a convention, to maintain a relationship, or to contribute to an apa.

I just read and am currently enormously enthusiastic about an article (that I would gladly copy for anyone interested) called "Managing Without Managers," by Ricardo Semler (*Harvard Business Review*, September-October 1989). Semler has also apparently written a book called *Turning the Tables* which probably covers more of the same ground in more detail and I may try to find it. Semler is the president of Semco S/A, an extremely successful, very efficient Brazilian manufacturing company. I not only wish I could work for a company like Semco, I wish I could belong to groups that functioned like it in some ways.

Here are some remarkable features of this company:

- ✓ Semco's organization is very simple. There are only three management levels and no supervisors report to other supervisors. The chain of command is short and decision-making involves all employees. It was designed specifically *not* to be pyramidal hierarchy.

- ✓ Salaries are based on skills not management level. So the engineer may earn more money than her supervisor if her skills are less easily replaced.

- ✓ People make up their own titles (the newsletter editor gave himself the title of "desktop publishing czar") and set their own salaries (This is a more complicated process than I can describe here, but it's definitely not the typical corporate or governmental process; you have to read the article.)

- ✓ There is no dress code. "A company that needs business suits to prove its seriousness probably lacks more meaningful proof."

- ✓ Time clocks were eliminated. "We assumed that all our employees were trustworthy adults" and it worked magnificently; people acted responsibly.

- ✓ Real profit-sharing.

- ✓ Complete transparency: that is, all financial reports are shared with all employees. Everyone knows what everyone else earns and what the company's financial situation is.

The parts of the article which really impressed me as applicable to WisCon and SF³ in general however, were Semler's ideas on rules and hierarchy.

Semler suggests that you don't need to create an organization chart.

[A long time ago] *If you had to kill a mammoth or do without supper, there was no time to draw up an organization chart, assign tasks, or*

delegate authority. Basically, the person who saw the mammoth from farthest away was the Official Sighter; the one who ran fastest was the Head runner; whoever threw the most accurate spear was the Grand Marksman; and the person all others respected most and listened to was the Chief. That's all there was to it. Distributing little charts to produce an appearance of order would have been a waste of time. It still is.

What I'm saying is, put ten people together, don't appoint a leader, and you can be sure that one will emerge. So will a sighter, a runner, and whatever else the group needs. We form the groups, but they find their own leaders. That's not a lack of structure, that's just a lack of structure imposed from above.

But getting back to that mammoth, why was it that all the members of the group were so eager to do their share of the work—sighting, running, spearing, chiefing—and to stand aside when someone else could do it better? Because they all got to eat the thing once it was killed and cooked. What mattered was results, not status.

This seems to me to be eminently applicable to the WisCon concomm. We all know individually what we get out of doing the con, and when those reasons apply, we no longer stay on the concomm.

Now on to those rules... Semler suggests that if you trust one another as responsible adults, few written rules are necessary. Common sense will do.

We have other ways of combating hierarchy too. Most of our programs are based on the notion of giving employees control over their own lives. In a word we hire adults, and then we treat them like adults.

Think about that. Outside the factory, workers are men and women who elect governments, serve in the army, lead community projects, raise and educate families, and make decisions every day about the future. Friends solicit their advice. Salespeople court them. Children and grandchildren look up to them for their wisdom and experience. But the moment they walk into the factory, the company transforms them into adolescents. They have to wear badges and name tags, arrive at a certain time, stand in line to punch the clock or eat their lunch, get permission to go to the bathroom, give lengthy explanations every time they're five minutes late, and follow instructions without asking a lot of questions.

One of my first moves when I took control of Semco was to abolish norms, manuals, rules, and regulations. Everyone knows you can't run a large organization without regulations, but everyone also knows that most regulations are poppycock. They rarely solve problems. On the contrary, there is usually some obscure corner of the rule book that justifies the worst silliness people can think up. Common sense is a riskier tactic because it requires personal responsibility.

It's also true that common sense requires just a touch of civil disobedience every time

someone calls attention to something that's not working. We had to free the Thoreaus and the Tom Paines in the factory and come to terms with the fact that civil disobedience was not an early sign of revolution but a clear indication of common sense at work.

So we replaced all the nitpicking regulations with the rule of common sense and put our employees in the demanding position of using their own judgement.

The rules you are generating, Dick, deal with common sense issues. You have heard several of us say again and again in different ways that they are unnecessary. And they are! But more than that, instituting them gradually creates a system—in the apa, on the WisCon concom, in SF³, in the workplace, in life!—in which people feel less and less like responsible adults. And why? Because the system treats them like irresponsible adolescents/inmates. Which will only encourage people to act accordingly. ("There's no rule against it..." "I'm not cheating, I'm taking advantage of a loophole.")

Specifically, here and now, by joining the apa the apa members have all agreed to communicate with one another within some very loose constraints. If we are no longer interested, we can drop out. If the OE defeats that one and only purpose by his/her management of the apa, we can replace the OE or create a new apa with a new OE. not only do we not need the rules you've been proposing—because common sense has been working just fine—but the creation of more and more rules could very well stifle the energy of the members who now enjoy the apa.

You and I seem to have different slants on the phrase "to be organized," Dick. to me, it means getting things done in the order of their importance. And I am organized sometimes well, sometimes not at all. But it seems to me that your understanding of that phrase has to do with a separate process that is largely unconnected with accomplishing a goal. Rather it's something you think should be done before doing the work, before having fun, or before dealing with your personal life—sort of a stage-setting process. And somehow, that process has gotten out of hand. You spend so much time "getting organized" yourself and trying to get other people organized, that you end up with a relatively small block of time left for doing the stuff you're organizing to do...

Your apazines are sometimes the most interesting ones contributed to the apa. When you're doing mail comments, for example, you provide more real responses to what people have written than anyone else I've seen with the exception of Steve Swartz. I like reading those zines a lot; they are part of the reason I hope we'll always be friends. You're a smart and interesting person. I wish you'd do more of that kind of writing and allow the apa organization to remain loose, even if it seems messy to you.

I'd like to carry on this discussion further than my idiosyncratic differences with Dick. I'd like to talk about how to make meetings (SF³ or job types) productive. I'd like to talk about how to make bosses treat us like adults and how to create—in our own lives—less hierarchical and rule-bound systems. Anyone interested?

When Gorby Met The Pope

