



Welcome to *Union Street* #67 (Obsessive Press [JG] #169 and Peerless Press [SC] #69), the zine with the transmogrifying seasonal masthead. It comes to you from Jeanne Gomoll and Scott Custis, whose address is coincidentally 2825 Union Street, Madison, WI 53704-5136. Phone 608-246-8857. *Union Street* was created on a Macintosh Quadra 840AV, and hardcopy was printed on a Laserwriter IINTX printer. Text was created with Microsoft Word 5.1 and laid out with Aldus PageMaker 5.0. The *Union Street* Logo was designed with Adobe Illustrator 5.5 and Adobe Photoshop 3.0. All contents are copyrighted © by Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll, March 1995, for Turbo-Charged Party Animal APA #110. Members FWA.

## Diane Martin

[JG] I enjoyed your Winnipeg Folk Festival report a lot, especially the way you organized the whole thing into topics. Having just returned from a camping trip of my own with Scott and not knowing any of the musicians you mentioned, I found my urge to comment triggered most often by the bits about camping.

Scott and I have gone camping at least once every summer since we met (11 years ago). My family used to camp a lot when I was very young, but I started camping apart from them when I was in college — in the early 1970s — mostly at one of Dane County's two backpacking state parks: Newport State Park — which can be found on the Lake Michigan side of upper Door County — and Rock Island State Park which is the small island off the larger Washington Island that is located off the very northern tip of the peninsula. The first time I camped at Newport with some college friends, we owned very little of even the most basic kinds of camping equipment. We borrowed some stuff and rented other equipment, and survived mostly because the weather stayed fine and because it is possible for any human being to survive without food or beer or soda for more than a few days. We got dirty and hungry, but had fun splashing in the waves of our own private beach and hiking around the park. I learned some valuable lessons about camping which one fails to learn if one pulls a car into one's campsite and uses the trunk for a pantry (which was my family's *modus operandi*). At Newport, you leave your car in the parking lot at the entrance to the park. At Rock Island you leave your car on Washington Island and take the *Karfi*—a foot ferry—across the straight ("Devil's Doorway") between the islands. The first lesson was: don't pack a 10-pound textbook just in case you get some time to do some studying. Second, don't pack a whole stack of books because you don't know what you'll be in the mood to read. Third, to hell with fashion. The lessons were many, but most of them could be distilled into one meta-lesson: PACK LIGHT. After a mile or more wearing an extremely heavy backpack, I found it easier and easier to understand the Bible's (and Herman Melville's) maxim, "all, all is vanity."

Freeze-dried food; tiny, lightweight pup tents, and a Spartan approach to packing inspired my planning for many years afterward. And then I met Scott, whose family's idea of "camping" involved RVs, electrical outlets, and sometimes even a TV. Scott and I had to compromise on our respective bottom lines when it came to planning a camping trip. I gave up freeze-dried food and agreed to pack a cooler for Scott's requisite steaks and beers. Scott gave up the idea that "vacation" doesn't include the



concept, “work” in its definition. In truth, the steaks have been great, and I myself soon added another weighty item — air mattresses — for a little bit of padding between our sleeping bags and the ground cover. But every year we refine and update our packing list (stored, of course, on the computer) in an attempt to eliminate some weight from our packs or just to make things easier. Scott finally gave up on beer this summer, which made the cooler much, much lighter. Instead, we took a trip across to Washington Island on the ferry mid-camping trip, to refresh the ice in our cooler and stopped for a beer along the way. This year we discovered a really neat little inflatable, dish washing sink which eliminated the need for a very cumbersome plastic tub. And Scott is planning to replace his old-fashioned, bulky sleeping bag this year, with one of those new models that stuff down to the size of a loaf of bread. Like you, we are quite delighted by the advances in camping technology which have resulted in some wondrously light-weight, yet durable tents, sleeping bags, and other equipment. I especially admire rip cords in collapsible tent poles.

Scott was more than a little dubious about the value of a vacation that involves so much sweat and energy; in fact, he still may be less enthusiastic about camping on Rock Island than I am, but we will probably continue going up there regularly. It’s a gorgeous place, and one of the most peaceful places I know. The long curve of the white sand beach against the backdrop of forest, wild lake and sky is one that I invoke whenever I want to relax. Or I recall the image of one of our regular campsites a few feet from a cliff overlooking a rocky shoreline, a fir tree framing the sunset. Or the amazing night sky blazing with stars and the Milky Way, or the way the hypnotic sound of the surf can be heard all over the island, as it sucks and tumbles the millions of rounded, dolomite rocks, which gave the island its name. There are no roads on, nor bridge across to Rock Island. The absence of automobile noises is almost startling at first. And there are only 40 campsites on the whole island; rarely are all of them filled. After the last ferry leaves at 4 pm taking the day-trippers with it, there just aren’t many people left. Every year the same thing happens: Within a day or two after we arrive, I suddenly notice that I no longer feel a weight upon my shoulders, and that before it went away, I hadn’t realized the strain was there. Rock Island is the place I always imagine myself going to if something really bad should happen in my life.

It’s funny, though, about how living out of a tent, even for a week or less, tends to change some

priorities and behaviors. I also feel happy when I can manage to avoid a midnight stroll to the outhouse, especially when that stroll must be taken across a quarter mile or so of pitch black night in a forest whose paths are not quite visible even with a flashlight. So I tend to avoid drinking anything a few hours before crawling into the tent. And indeed, as you say, warm showers become a more and more wonderful concept the longer one has been without. Another weird switch in normal, every-day behavior for me is that I like to start the fire; in fact, I’ve discovered that I’m really very good at starting fires. This is weird indeed, since, I normally avoid even striking matches. I don’t like fire at all. But at camp I’m a regular fire-bug. And Scott suddenly takes an interest in cooking. It’s strange.

As my mom got less tolerant of the discomforts of camping (and very probably, impatient because we all continued to assume that she would take care of “housekeeping” duties), our family gradually progressed from wilderness tent camping, to campsites with electrical outlets, to trailer-tent camping, and finally to cottage rentals, by the time I was in high school. Mom and Dad usually stay at hotels these days. But not having kids, and being lucky enough to have a partner like Scott who shares campsite duties with me, I think I’ll be able to stick with it a lot longer than mom did.

[SC] Thank you for a great travel piece. I’m still trying to figure out how the red paper crab you included fits in. Getting a chance to see that many folk bands and musicians would be great. The idea of the Winnipeg Folk Festival is cool, but the reality of camping in a crowd of 28,000 people is rather unattractive. I think I could deal with a large crowd for an event, or I can deal with going to Canada for a camping trip, but I’m not sure I’d want to combine the two.

I’m glad you chose to tell us about Jim, too.

### **Kim & Kathi Nash**

[JG] Kim, given that you believe in the chameleon method of driving in strange cities, I recommend that you stick to cabs when you visit Boston, where most drivers seem primarily intent on suicide, secondarily on homicide.

Thanks for the ABA report, Kathi. Now that it’s sited in Chicago for the next many years, I hope that I can get down there soon. In fact next year might be a really good idea since the ABA is scheduled several weeks after WisCon. After that, the schedule will return for the regular weekend after Memorial Day, which is — of course — very soon after

WisCon, and will often conflict with a certain bacchanalian feast.

[SC] I enjoyed the travel pieces from you too. Seems like driving is a source of a lot of stress for you guys. Maybe next time you should take the bus to Chicago. Mass transit can be a wonderful thing.

I'd also like to make a trip to the ABA someday, but I am less interested in gathering stuff than in seeing who's there and catching some events or programs.

The trip to Minneapolis sounds like a nightmare. Paying \$89 for a room with no air conditioning? Wow.

### Jim Nichols

[JG] I've been noticing that the flying saucer has been steadily reducing more and more of your masthead to rubble. It looks like little will remain after the next issue. Is masthead renewal by alien device the goal? Will there be a new title lasered into place when the demolition is complete? Inquiring minds want to know.

### Georgie Schnobrich

[JG] The paisley cake sounds utterly weird and delightful. You didn't happen to snap a photograph of it, did you? I would love to see it.

Tracy Benton's "The Houston Symphony on Ice" reminded you of a line in a Berryman's song, "Milwaukee Symphony, come see them water-ski," and that in turn created the image in my mind of many human pyramids of musicians, water-skiing and playing their instruments at a Wisconsin Dells extravaganza.. Whew! This consensual hallucinating may be getting out of hand.

I agree with your comment that anything "that isn't rude enough to count as bashing is dismissed as whining...." Indeed, using the word victim as an insult has become high, deadly sport recently.

I don't know why *you* get picky about the use of the word "religious," but I share your discomfort at the idea of any and all personal values defined as a basis for religion (re your comment to **Lisa Frietag**). For me too, religion carries in its definition the assumption that some kind of god exists. Some people have told me that they consider my politics (feminism, for example) to be my religion. And I've certainly heard the phrase, "secular religion" often enough, though I have never thought it made any sense, except that the concept is used as a lever for the proselytizing types to push their religion onto government (equal time, they say, because secular religion is already supported by government). Any-

way, that is why *I* get picky about the wider use of the term "religious."

On a related topic (since you muse that physics might be considered a contemporary religion): I have just bought a copy of Margaret Wertheim's *Pythagoras' Trousers: God Physics and the Gender Wars*, and it looks like a fascinating read for its study of how religious assumptions and the almost totally male dominated field of physics have affected one another through history. From the jacket blurb: "Wertheim puts forward the startling hypothesis that gender inequality in physics is a result of the religious origins of the enterprise. Physics, she reveals, is a science based on a conception of God as a divine mathematical creator. For most of its history, it has been intimately entwined with the institutions of Christianity, and in line with those institutions has historically been closed to women." I gather that Wertheim believes that there *still* exists a religious undercurrent in contemporary physics. I'll let you know what I think about the book after I've read it.

[SC] In yet another issue chock full of good comments, I have to tell you that I especially liked your Ninja Baker comment to **Vijay**.

YCT me, you had an interesting way of looking at affirmative action. Your metaphor comparing it to newspaper coupons left me wondering how you felt about affirmative action. Do you think it has been a successful policy? Racism and sexism are so ingrained in our society that, I believe, only the strong arm of government can hope to address the problem in employment, education, housing and other areas.

### Michael Shannon

[SC] I suppose it is just mid-life crisis (my 40th birthday looms on the horizon next year) but I have been daydreaming lately about getting a bike. I took motorcycle lessons years ago, but after I finished the lessons I got laid off from my job and the bike purchase got indefinitely postponed. My Dad has always railed against motorcycles and threatened us with violence if he ever caught any of us kids on one. Now he's an old guy living 150 miles away and no longer a factor. Maybe I'll get around to buying one yet. Anyway, congratulations and I hope you have a great time with yours.

YCT **Pat** re: nipple clips, that damn riding crop and other nasty rumors. I'm afraid nipple clips are just not my style, Michael. As for Nevenah, most of us in these pages are too well acquainted with her overheated imagination to believe every wild rumor that floats around.



## Martin Smith

[SC] I enjoyed your recap of Conservative Party politics. We got a little news here about Major's resignation and re-election, but few newspapers understood enough about what was happening to be very coherent. The thing that most struck me about your comments was how much you seemed focused on personalities with relatively little mention of how the candidates differed on policy. The principal difference between Redwood and Portillo seemed to be the potential for scandal. Who is leans to left, who's in the center, who is to the right and what sort of changes are the far right candidates promoting? Anytime you feel like ranting about politics in Britain, please go for it.

## Steve Swartz

[JG] On the matter of the effects of single-parent families and all the attendant assumptions, I would really like to see some careful research on the rarely questioned assumption of the importance of both male and female role models in the successful raising of children. I think we're going to hear more and more about the terrible results of absent fathers in the next many years with attendant requirement that mothers not be allowed to do without them for their own good.

Welcome to the neighborhood, Steve.

[SC] Great comments, Steve.

YCT **Jim Nichols**, "But Ohio, Ohio is the quintessence of America." How true. In the latest issue of the *Progressive* magazine, Ohio was the only state to have two candidates profiled for their article on the "Ten Dimmest Bulbs in Congress." Ohio seems to have its finger on the pulse of America.

## Sandra Taylor

[JG] Thanks for a great ABA con report, Sandy. Like **Kim and Kathi's**, your description really makes me want to attend the ABA one of these years. And the story of the morning after the ABA was very funny, even though I had already heard a similar version from you soon after it happened.

## Kim Winz

[SC] YCT **Lisa** on organs of executed prisoners. I understand the Chinese are very scientific about executing their inmates to harvest organs. As I explained before, they will schedule an execution depending on the demand for an organ. If they need a liver, for instance, they shoot the guy in the head. If they need eyes, they shoot them in the chest. Very practical.

[JG] Great title, Kim. Though I would have liked *Bite the Wax Tadpole*, too. Maybe **Pete's** gotten a little bit conservative since he became a father. Maybe you should give him a little shock every once in a while to loosen him up.

What a funny dream you had about my sister! I copied it onto an e-mail message to her (and copied it to some other members of my family).

Wow, I was surprised that someone actually took me up on my offer to explain my philosophy about marriage. But thanks for the opportunity to do so; though I have sometimes talked about it, I don't think I've ever written it down. And that's sometimes an enlightening process....

I've always felt super-conscious about the meaning of ceremonies. Take innocuous, fun occasions like the Fourth of July, for instance. Every time I watch fireworks, I always think of that line from *The Star-Spangled Banner*, "...bombs bursting in air," and imagine that the audience is oohing and ahhhing a demo war. I can never really get into fireworks. This tendency to examine the subtexts of ceremonies is a characteristic thing for me.

The turning point in my thinking about ceremony, happened during my last semester at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I would graduate with honors in a few months and my parents happily began to make plans to travel out to Madison to attend the ceremonies. My reaction to their travel plans was deep resentment. Mom and I had pretty much avoided conversations of more than two sentences during the whole of my college career. We could never talk for any length of time without arguing. Although I had written long, exuberant letters home during my Freshman year, all about the excitement I was feeling about my classes and the new ideas I was encountering, neither mom or dad ever attempted to answer those letters or to engage me in discussion about what was important to me then. It turned out that mom didn't even read many of those letters. She announced to the rest of the family that I was purposely trying to make her feel inferior and refused to read any of them after the first couple. My father was different: he told me frequently that he was very proud of me, but I think he extended his appreciation for something I didn't much value. He was proud that I was in college and getting through it, but mostly that I would soon leave it. Dad and I argued a lot about politics. (As you can imagine, I avoided going home a lot.) Dad and I argued about the so-called "real world" that I was

avoiding by putting too much stock in the things I was learning about life and myself in what I guess Dad must have thought of as the “fake world,” academe. So, as I approached graduation, and I considered what a momentous time my four and a half years in school had been for me, I didn’t really want to sour the celebration of that experience with confrontations with my parents’ very different view of it. I had completely paid for my own education and had in fact enrolled against the advice of my parents (“You won’t need a degree to get married,” said mom. “You’d be better off getting a job in the real world,” said dad.) and so I didn’t even feel that I owed my parents any thanks for having graduated. And on top of that, I wasn’t very interested in joining several hundred other graduates in a mass graduation ceremony. (Since there were far too many of us to hand diplomas to individually, the class would stand as a group and be graduated *en masse*.) So I wrote a letter home about how the mass graduation ceremony didn’t connect in my mind with the hugely important impact of my studies, and that I had decided not to attend. I never heard a word from mom. Dad claimed he was unable to enjoy the local sports booster ceremonies for a while afterward because of the ideas about ceremonies that I’d shared with him in the letter. But they were both very disappointed. They asked me to come home for a visit so they could give me my graduation present, which turned out to be a single, foam pillow (an odd thing in many ways, not the least because they knew and disapproved of the fact that I had a double bed).

So anyway, I continued to think about ceremonies, and of course, have thought a lot about what might potentially be considered the most significant ceremony in which many of us participate — the marriage ceremony. First of all, let me say firmly and clearly that my opinions about marriage connect to my own personal life choices and morality. I do not use my opinions as a standard upon which to judge other people’s behavior. This is a matter of personal taste. When my friends choose to marry, I celebrate with them, and am glad for their happiness and the manner they choose to express their love. But I choose otherwise.

For me, the marriage ceremony contains so many bad assumptions and disagreeable connotations that I can never conceive of myself ever marrying. It is the ceremony — not the idea of making promises to a life-partner — that I reject. To me, the core of importance in a marriage ceremony are the promises that two people make to one another when they form a life partnership. In our

culture, legal marriage ceremonies require the couple to stand and make their promises before a religious leader or a representative of the state, who promise in turn to act as future arbiters and enforcers of the contract made in front of them. Since I neither believe in god nor grant any religious leader moral authority over my life, and since I regard as mostly corrupt government’s control over the personal lives of individuals, it would seem damned silly of me to hand over control to either of these two groups. I think that if I wanted children, I might feel differently. Kids, I think, deserve protection from an outside, third party, when the parents fail to act responsibly. But, I do not (and have taken care that I can not) have children. So that’s not an issue for me.

I don’t want to be held accountable to either state or church for a relationship that I think of as profoundly personal, as something between me and one person only. I don’t even care for the idea that a marriage is a covenant made in front of (and enforced by) one’s community. But more than that, I would rather put my trust in my partner’s promise, and hope that he similarly trusts me. Given my distrust of god and country in the matter of a life partnership, it would be truly hypocritical of me to say, “sure I promise, and just to show you how sincere I am, I will bring in a priest or a judge, both of whose power I reject.

That’s the bad assumptions part. The disagreeable connotations part encompasses all the stuff that happens after the ceremony — when the community (one’s family, friends, cohorts, and government) get into the act and try to enforce the traditions of married people roles upon the two people. I prefer keeping people off balance. It’s easier to define who I am and who we are in the absence familiar role models.

Scott and I have made promises to one another, but they were made in private, and I feel no need to share them with a priest, a judge, or with my community.

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**Jae Adams**

[JG] Your writing is elegant and complex even when you’re feeling depressed and unmotivated. Amazing.

I look forward to reading your observations about your trip to England.



## Karen Babich

[JG] An apt title, *Blue Sweat Special*. Let's hope that this weather doesn't turn out to be a permanent fixture of the greenhouse effect. I find myself yearning for sub-zero, winter temperatures.

Ever since Scott and I were blown away by our first (and second) experience of Broadway theater, we have been more and more interested in seeing live theater. This year, we've got season tickets to the local repertory theater, and tickets for three of a four show season by the American Players Theater at Spring Green. We've seen one Broom Street Theater show this year and are planning to see another soon. I agree with you, one show every three years is not enough.

Your comments about the dangers of a vivid imagination and its potential for self-terrorization, remind me of a certain *Outer Limits* show whose central idea I can still recall and inflict upon myself. I think the source of the fear has something to do with my dislike of driving over arched bridges where I can't see the opposite side, or driving around curved, mountainside roads. I can't quite convince my imagination that there is no chance that something awful and unexpected lies at the other, unseen side. The *Outer Limits* show was about a little girl who falls through a hole in her bedroom wall that temporarily opens into the fourth dimension. Her daddy calls in a neighbor who just happens to be a physicist. The helpful scientist explains about the fourth dimension, and then daddy crawls in and rescues his daughter — dragging her out just before the hole closes up again. I remember this story sometimes late at night before I go to bed, when I'm walking around the house locking doors and switching lights off. If the stairwell light isn't on, the house suddenly gets very dark when the last downstairs light is turned off, and I have to feel my way through the space at the base of the stairs to the switch on the wall. Sometimes it seems as if my hands have already moved through a wider space than the distance between banister and wall, and I imagine that my arms have begun disappearing into another dimension. Another step and I will fall in entirely.... And then my fingers encounter the smooth surface of wallpaper-covered plaster, and I heave a sigh of relief and switch on the light.

We quit AT&T for the same reason you did — because they stopped funding Planned Parenthood in response to protests from the Right. We got dozens of phone calls from AT&T asking us to please switch back, and all of the callers sounded completely perplexed when I told them our reason

for dropping their service. I guess my explanation never fit into their standard multiple answer slots. Ironically, AT&T is still getting pressure from the Right to act even more regressively. Recently, a new telephone service started up (organized almost exactly like Working Assets) that gives money to the Religious Right with the express goal of putting Christianity into the Constitution. They urge their constituency to boycott AT&T as long as it hires gays and to switch to their service to work for a literal interpretation of "One Nation under God." (I heard about this on NPR's "All Things Considered.")

We're still very interested in going to the Monet exhibit. We will try to get back to you about dates very soon. Maybe, if we've been Very Good, maybe we have already talked with you about it by the time you read this.

[SC] The beastly heat was noted by many apans last month. Jeanne and I have been talking more seriously lately about getting central air conditioning than we ever did before. We always figured that with just a bedroom air conditioner, we could sweat out the relatively few days per year that are really bad. But this year has been awful. I'd hate to think about going through another summer like this.

YCT me on minac, I care about quality, too. That is why I'm so interested in who gets invited into the apa. But as OE, I don't concern myself officially with how "good" zines are. I care about minac, whether a member is making use of their membership by contributing a reasonable amount reasonably often. That is something I can measure. Quality is a subjective thing that would be messy and unwise for me to get into in an official way. I don't think it is unreasonable to complain when someone contributes only the bare minimum, only when required.

## Tracy Benton

[JG] You ask if I think making compromises on neatness is damaging in itself. No, it doesn't feel that way to me. Having been on both sides of the issue (being both the neater and messier of a pair of housemates), I can appreciate the sacrifice required on both sides to compromise. And as long as the issues on which I am asked to compromise aren't central, moral issues for me, it seems a quite reasonable (and frequently satisfying) transaction: an expression of love and respect.

[SC] I recommend Michael Moore's show *TV Nation* as another way to combat the Rush Limbaugh blues.

## Bill Bodden

[JG] I'm curious about how one can play a game based on a real-life event like a Civil War battle campaign. Does that make each game an exercise in alternate reality? Can the players affect a different outcome than the actual events?

Those songs might not seem overplayed if you stopped listening to the radio stations that overplay them. Merely a suggestion. None of the titles of the songs you listed were even vaguely familiar to me.

[SC] Re: hot spicy food, is it true that hot food can kill taste buds? Jeanne and I are also fans of the hot stuff.

Yes, I find your writing to be amusing. I was really amused, for instance, at your clever piece ("How Well Do I Know My Right Hand") where you berated yourself for not writing enough comments, but at the same time asked questions in order to solicit more comments from us. Good strategy, Bill.

## Heather-Aynne Brooks

[SC] Welcome to the (politically correct) Eastside of Madison.

## Clay Colwell

[JG] Sorry I was unclear. My original comment to **Diane Martin** (regarding her comment to **Heather-Lynne**) was: "[As a teenager] I responded to the rule [that politics have nothing to do with women's lives] by caring more about men's lives. Other women turned their back on ideas that they'd been assured had nothing to do with their own lives. Which is the healthier response?"

I meant that question to be read as a rhetorical one. The answer I thought implicit was: "*neither*." Furthermore I meant that question to ironically suggest that it was sad that I failed, as a young woman, to consider other choices: like, (and especially) questioning the very assumptions that create artificial differences between women and men in the first place. Ah, but how much better if I had simply *said* that in my original comment to Diane, hmm?

With regard to your comment to me (which responded to my comment to **Steve Swartz**) (My, how complicated this gets.), I agree with you about the potential pitfalls of the ambiguous use of significant words. "Love" isn't the only ambiguous word warped by overuse and misdirection....

I've been noticing that big business interests have gotten very good at appropriating the catch-phrases of the ecological movement, sometimes skewing their meaning 180°, so that the very pollution that ecological groups attack, is redefined by

industry in earth-friendly terms. For example, so-called "recycled" products have to be carefully investigated these days because the term is slung around so indiscriminately. I worry very much about the new trend in which the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources increasingly involves itself, and that is the so-called "partnerships" with private industry to affect ecological change. Big business is more than willing to do a little good on one hand to hide the bigger bad on the other, and then cloak itself with green movement language.

"Be yourself" might be pretty good advice if your own self is a better person than the fake person you assume others may prefer. I stumbled through job interviews for a long time, never convincing an employer that I might be a good bet, until one day I went for a job interview that I didn't really care about. I thought I understood what the job was about and that I wasn't qualified for it, but I went anyway, figuring that I would use the opportunity to hone my interviewing skills. As the job was described in more detail, I gradually realized that I had been mistaken; I realized that I was perfect for the job, and because I hadn't rehearsed any fake lines, my natural enthusiasm tumbled out and we ended up having a great discussion. I got the job. And more importantly, I got a job that is still capable of sparking my enthusiasm, rather than a job for which I only pretend enthusiasm.

I've been intrigued lately about some of the comments I've heard about *Babylon 5*. Scott and I saw the first couple episodes and weren't very impressed, but from what I've heard lately (especially about the story's complex politics, the continuing plot line, and the inclusion of low-on-the-hierarchy characters), I've got the feeling I might really like it nowadays. But we continue to avoid it — now, because we've already missed so much, and the continuing plot lines make it difficult to understand what's going on. Is there anywhere we can find a "catch-up" summary of the story so far?

[SC] A very good zine considering the time pressures you're under.

YCT me, I believe the U.N. has issued a statement of basic human rights but I don't know exactly what it says. I think it would be a fine thing if we gave up capital punishment as part of a requirement that the State not be permitted to kill its own citizens. Law enforcement officers should only be permitted to use deadly force for self defense (in the Randy Weaver case, recently resulting in a payoff to the family of over three million dollars, the FBI apparently issued a "shoot to kill" order on



Weaver. That should never happen.) Of course if you take the view that the State is not subject to the rule of law, then such restrictions are useless. In America, I think holding the government to the rule of law is a constant battle, but at least it's possible to do.

### Lisa Freitag

[JG] I really liked your essay on "Being Someone Else." The thing with secret identities is that if you pretend enough, you become the thing, and then it's not necessary to be secretive about it anymore.

I like the story about the reluctant king too; it's a powerfully reassuring fantasy of community, that our leaders take on more responsibility than reward for their service. I think (smaller) fannish conventions have developed a similar philosophy about power: the con chairs generally take on their positions with hesitation and celebrate when their term ends. I think that's a good thing.

*Slan's* hero was a white male. Zenna Henderson's People were white and middle class. It seems to me that the hero of Huxley's *Brave New World* was a white intellectual. Heinlein's *Methuselah's Children* also fits into the category of "oppressed superior people," in which both the oppressor and the oppressed understand who is "better," and in fact the persecution happens because the more powerful class fears the smaller, superior group. None of these stories deal with the much different experience of a class of people defined as inferior in every way because of the color of their skin. The stories you mentioned were mostly about the people who wrote the stories—white, middle class folks; we haven't heard from many victims of racism in science fiction, other than Butler and Delany.

I liked your comment that the trick of photography (as art) lies "in standing someplace unique and interesting." Fascinating insight. Speaking of which, thanks for the quote from *The Iron Dragon's Daughter*. I read that book recently and liked it a lot, but can't recall reading that particular excerpt. In spite of how unfamiliar it sounds, it perfectly sums up the theme of the entire book, as the girl moves from one story to the next and gradually moves out of her psychic prison. Thanks!

[SC] Great piece on secret identities.

YCT me I can think of only two really prominent black writers in SF, Octavia Butler and Chip Delaney. There are probably others, but not many. We could use more. Not only black writers, but writers of all racial

backgrounds. SF is still largely white and male and, no matter how fanciful their imaginations, white men cannot really plumb the depths of racism and discrimination. Not that they haven't tried with interesting results either directly or with alien metaphors as you suggest, but there is still much about these subjects to explore from the view of people who've really lived it. .

### Karl Hailman and Hope Kiefer

[SC] Thanks for sharing the good news about Victor Allens (that they're in trouble.) I heard that Starbucks of Seattle is interested in buying them.

Thanks also for the information on Working Assets. I think we are very close to making a change to them.

Win? Well Hope, I'm pretty easy. A beer? M&M's? My eternal gratitude? What did you have in mind?

### Pat Hario

[JG] I think that you are right (in your comment to **Vijay**) that it is shared experience, rather than blood, that binds family members together. But for the same reason, family members who live far apart from one another (geographically or otherwise), will tend to gradually build up many layers of experience that they no longer share, and the lack of that connection will gradually lever them apart—in spite of their blood connection.

How delightful that you defended me against mean old Scott! Thank you! Justified or not, I always enjoy it when people leap to my defense. We read your spirited rebuke of Scott for having implicated me in his nefarious alphabet scheme as we drove up to Door County. I heartily agree, Scott should be ashamed of himself! Later that very day we stopped at a little shop in Fish Creek and were kidding around with one another when a clerk mistook Scott's manner for something else.... The nice lady touched my arm and murmured with concern, "Is that man bothering you, dear?" I'm afraid it wasn't very polite of us to burst out into hoots, but finally I reassured her that I was just fine. What a delightful day! Thereafter, I frequently threatened to announce to perfect strangers that this strange man, i.e., Scott, was bothering me. I wonder why people don't leap to my defense more often?

[SC] YCT me, you sure earned lots of points with Jeanne by defending her in the apa. A rare thing. Just to keep the record straight, however, you should know that Jeanne lays out the business pages as well as our zine every month and she is quite capable of tweaking a few details that get past my attention (many a time I've looked at our finished zine and exclaimed, "Hey, how did *that* get



in here?") So if our order in the table of contents slides around a bit, she could certainly have something to do with it.

It's been a pretty dreary summer for movies. The best ones I've seen were *Apollo 13* and *Crumb*.

### Andy Hooper

[SC] YCT me, from time to time I find it hard to resist the urge to step up to the cage marked "Hooper" and poke the slumbering grizzly inside with a sharp stick. It's an evil urge, I confess, but I have relatively few vices these days. I was not disappointed. That grizzly still has sharp fangs and a nasty roar.

I was disappointed that we did not get a chance to see much of you while you were in town. Our camping plans and reservations were set in stone quite a while ahead of time and just weren't flexible. We will be at ReinConation and expect to catch up with you then.

### Peter Larsen

[JG] Excellent essay, Peter, you've convinced me: I will henceforth stop using the word "erotica." The word "pornography" has been endowed unfairly with a negative qualitative judgment, just as the word "art" continues to be used by some people as if it contains implicit qualitative judgments of "good" or "beautiful." (I wonder if the term "fine art" was inspired by the same urge that created the quasi-acceptable pornographic category, "erotica?") You said, "Mostly, erotica is the tactic of liberals who believe that censors will be appeased by linguistic contortions." ...Like avoiding the label "feminist SF" on books, hmmm?

I very much agree with you that feminists who call for censorship are doing harm to the women's movement, just as those on the Left do harm to the cause when they call for limits on civil liberties because they fear anti-abortion or militia violence.

But I want to take (a very little) issue with you when you write this: "Liberal,' especially feminist attacks have done nothing except give the Right more weapons and cause the Left to contort some definition of 'erotica' that they imagine they can live with." If, by "attacks" you mean the calls for censorship and abridgment of other civil liberties in the cause of anti-pornography, then I agree with you and withdraw my argument. But I do not think that expressing anger (or horror or disgust) at some forms of pornography damages the Left. Suppression of such criticism would do far more harm. That the Right appropriates that language and attempts to use it against us is just the way things go. The Right has appropriated much Leftist language in the last decade; it's almost as if the Republican and Democratic parties have exchanged vocabularies recently. We lose the struggle for ownership of the words only when we forget what they mean.

I also liked your comments on some of the recent action-adventure films based on comics. Scott and I are both getting real tired of the message that violence is awful (or fun), depending on whether it's the hero or villain that does it.

Welcome back to the apa, Peter.

[SC] Welcome back.

Your points about "pornography" vs. "erotica" are well made. I just like the word "erotica" better. I'm more likely to pick up something with "erotica" in the title than "pornography." It implies (possibly falsely) some artistic value in comparison with the mass of pornography. Like "films" vs. "movies" or "photographs" vs. "pictures." Trying to distinguish erotica from pornography in order to legally define what is acceptable and unacceptable sexual material is wrong, of course.

Scott & Jeanne  
17 August 1995