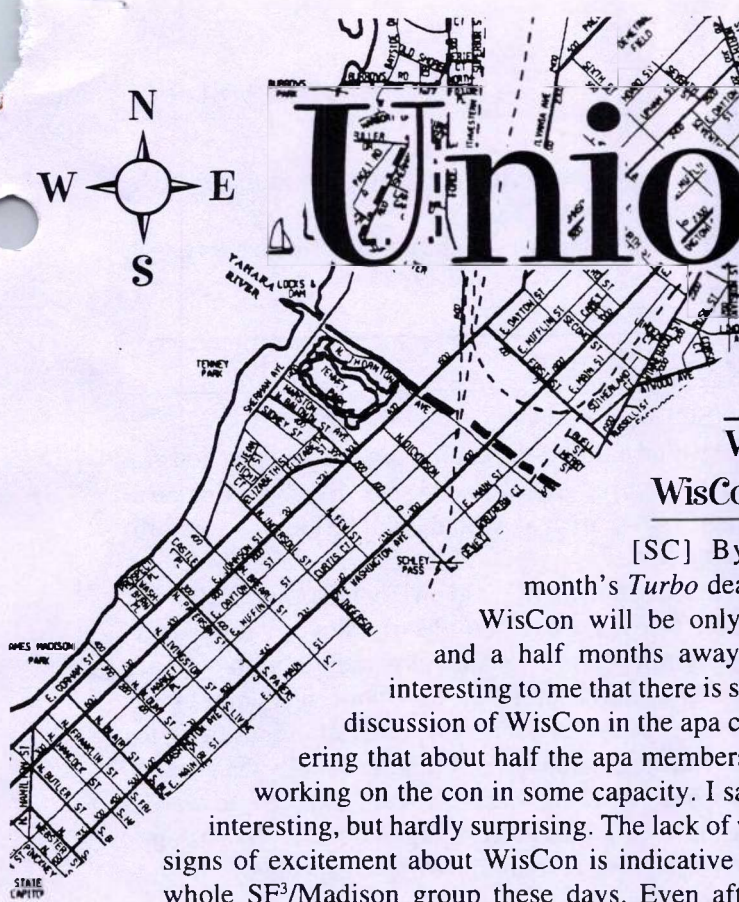


Union Street

A joint zine by Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis



Wither WisCon?

[SC] By this month's *Turbo* deadline, WisCon will be only three and a half months away. It is interesting to me that there is so little discussion of WisCon in the apa considering that about half the apa membership is working on the con in some capacity. I say it is interesting, but hardly surprising. The lack of visible signs of excitement about WisCon is indicative of the whole SF³/Madison group these days. Even after the success of last year's con, I think WisCon may again be in for some rough times.

Trouble started almost immediately after WisCon 20 was over. At the first postmortem meeting, no one stepped forward to head the next committee. In fact almost no one spoke up to run a major department on the next committee. We decided to set up a second meeting in a couple weeks and give someone a chance to volunteer to put together a committee to run WisCon 21, or we would have to cancel it and probably the balance of our five-year Concourse Hotel contract as well. That would most likely ruin our relationship with them for good.

At the sparsely attended second postmortem meeting, Jim Hudson and **Diane Martin** stepped forward to jointly chair WisCon 21. Their plan was to fill out gaps in their committee by bringing in a large amount of help from outside the Madison community. They have been quite successful. Madison has often been regarded as a very insular fan community. Jim and Diane have managed to integrate their committee with outside help to a greater degree than we have probably ever seen before. WisCon 21 is looking very promising at this point. Even without the high-profile guests and big events of last year, we have a well

organized committee, interesting and provocative guests and an ambitious program planned.

WisCon 21 is going to be a success. The question we need to start confronting now is, what happens after that? It is not too soon to start discussing this as I shall explain below.

In 1995, we negotiated a five year "contract" with the Concourse Hotel. We were told that this sort of long term arrangement was common in the hotel industry and that it would be very helpful for both of us to have "our" weekend reserved in advance, rather than have each year's committee set up a new agreement. The five year contract doesn't really obligate us to anything, it is just a way for us to reserve our weekend, but the hotel is taking this obligation seriously. It is hard for them to sell Memorial Day weekend and they might not be able to replace WisCon with another event in less than a year's time. They made this agreement with us expecting we would be running a convention every year. Each year, the new committee signs a specific contract with the hotel for that year. Tracy signed a contract for WisCon 19, Jeanne for WisCon 20, etc.

This year, the Concourse added a new twist to the annual contract renewal, a cancellation clause. The Concourse claims this is also becoming routine in the industry, but I suspect that they are actually responding to concerns that we may need to cancel WisCon. In brief, the cancellation clause specifies that if we decide to cancel WisCon after November 22 (six months before the con) we have to pay the hotel \$15,000 in damages. If we cancel after February 22 (three months out), we pay them \$18,000.

These dates and figures were arrived at after much discussion back and forth. I would have liked to have a lawyer help us draft some additional language protecting us in the event the *hotel* cancels out, but time became a factor and we wound up finally signing the contract at the end of December without these changes. Perhaps the next committee will be able to find/convince a lawyer to help us with next year's version of the contract. The point I am driving at is that we need to start

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Union Street #83
Obsessive Press (JG) #187
Peerless Press (SC) #85
Union Street was created using a Macintosh Quadra 840av, PageMaker 6.0, Illustrator 5.5 and a Laserwriter Select 360. Display font is Elroy. All contents copyright © 1996 by Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll February 1997 for *Turbo-Charged Party Animal Apa* #128.

thinking about the future now, because we face serious financial distress if next year's committee doesn't come together in time, or falls apart during the year. In addition to this, we are now completing the third year of our five year agreement. The Concourse would like to start talking with us soon about renewing for another five years.

Another reason to start talking about the future is the practical matter of organizing for WisCon since we moved to Memorial Day. Someone thinking about running WisCon 22 should start planning now. In the old days, when WisCon was held in February/March, we had a couple months after the convention for postmortem and organizing meetings before the advent of summer, when few people wanted to work on, or think about, WisCon. Now that we moved to Memorial Day, we are immediately into the summer blahs right after the con and it is easy to let things go until fall, when suddenly a lot of stuff (like sending out the first flyer and soliciting local ads) needs to get done. It would be wise, in my opinion, to start thinking about next year in the Spring.

But the real problem, as I see it, is the lack of enthusiasm locally for making big time commitments to WisCon. Who is going to step forward to run the ship next year? There are still lots of local folks who want to help, but few who want major committee head responsibility. Jeanne is chairing the programming committee this year and I am hotel liaison and security head for Ops, as well as running the Tiptree auction and planning the dessert function. We both intended to take this year off after the enormous two year commitment we made to WisCon 20. We are actively planning to step back from major commitments next year. We need some time off, but we are concerned about the group's new financial commitments to the hotel and the long term future of WisCon.

If we decide as a group to stop doing WisCon (temporarily or permanently), we have to actively plan for that. We can no longer afford to run the risk of having a poorly staffed committee fall apart during the year and dragging SF³ into financial ruin. We not only need a chairperson and committee to step forward, they (and we) have to be sure they intend to see the convention through to the end. In addition, we will soon have to get some sense that there is enough energy in the local group to run WisCon for five more years if we wish to secure our weekend date at the Concourse past 1999.

Turbo has never been a great forum for serious discussions about WisCon, but since CUBE is in hiatus, this is about the only outlet for such discussion that I have right now. I encourage everyone to think about all of this and talk about it with other folks who care about WisCon, but are not in the apa. I will be glad to share copies of this article with anyone who asks. I am looking forward to feedback from all quarters. I would like to see nothing

better than a spirited rebuttal of my take on the group's energy for doing WisCon.

Oh, and **Kim**, who is doing the *Turbo* party this year?

© Tracy Benton

[SC] Very funny cover!

I would hardly consider it a lame excuse that you are spending some of your valuable spare time working on a fanzine. That is great news and I will be looking forward to seeing it.

Good comment to **Vicki** on Hooters. Close call with the fire, you must have an electric stove. I remember having similar (less dramatic) experiences with electric stoves. These days I prefer the little poof and flame of gas. Of course cooking is such a rare and unfamiliar thing to me that turning on the wrong burner is usually the least of my worries when I approach a stove. Thanks for forwarding the Evil Overlord piece. I enjoyed it and wish a copy could be required reading for writers, especially TV and movie writers.

[JG] I was laughing over your story about your moment of fame on the *What D'Ya Know?* show, and was reminded of Scott's moment of fame at the Madison Rep play last month. You and **Bill** were sitting in the same section as we were, a few rows back, but we didn't get to talk after the show, and so I never asked you if you noticed Scott's moment in the spotlight.

The play was *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*. and involved a Shakespearean scholar whose imagination leads her to an active role in a fascinating re-interpretation of two Shakespeare plays. During the scene in which Romeo and Mercutio and the boys are running through the streets of Verona, trying to out-macho one another, Romeo takes off his cape in preparation for a sword fight. He looks around for a place to put it . . . and his gaze falls upon Scott. (Earlier, when we walked in and discovered that we had front row seats, I'd joked with Scott that maybe the actors would involve us somehow, as Rep actors have been known to do. Scott rolled his eyes and shook his head. He hates stuff like that.) Well, there we were in the front row and Romeo is stuffing his cape into Scott's arms. "Hold this for me," he says. A while later, after more scenes of macho puffing (as I said, this was definitely a re-interpretation of *Romeo and Juliet*) — Romeo leaps to the edge of the stage, inflates chest out and assumes a body-builder's stance directly in front of and to Scott. Romeo then grunts loudly at Scott, and grabs his cape back. I was laughing so

hard, tears were streaming down my face. Scott looked a bit stunned, and I *know* he was making some kind of resolution not to sit in the front row again.

Judging from your comments during the intermission, it seemed that I enjoyed that play more than you did, and not only because of the special entertainment of Romeo's cape. I've often fantasized about stepping into a work of fiction and "re-arranging" things to suit my interpretation. And it was fun to see a feminist, revisionist interpretation of those two Shakespearean characters. Scott and I are, in fact, going to see it *again*. We've got tickets to the Milwaukee Repertory Theater's version of it in a few weeks. It will be interesting to see another cast do the play (sort of a Meta-reinterpretation of a re-interpretation).

© Vijay Bowen

[SC] Nice to see that you seem to be doing OK just now. Seems to me you have had a pretty rough ride through life lately.

Excellent comment to **Clay** on naming. I have rarely been sympathetic to the practice of nicknaming. In my experience it is usually done to annoy or belittle people. I admit that sometimes the nicknames fit. Who was Vijay Amritraj?

© Heather Aynne Brooks

[SC] You sure hit the jackpot when you brought up Hooters. The conversation is likely to carry on for awhile yet, and there isn't nearly as much agreement on the subject as I expected. Good comment hook.

Re: abortion, reason and common sense vacated the field of the abortion battle long ago. Antiabortion activists do not see the contradiction in being "pro-life" at the same time they are cheering for the assassination of clinic doctors. It is common for "pro-lifers" to be pro death penalty, too. It is a fundamental tenet of religious fanatics that being "right" does not mean being logical.

Re: "classic" (*a.k.a.* old) rock, it always requires a moment of readjustment for me when someone talks about "classic" rock, they mean the music from the seventies. When I think of classic rock, I think of Buddy Holly, the Everly Brothers and everything pre-1964 Beatles. But you are right, of course the seventies stuff *is* old (and often quite bad.) I usually listen to stations playing current stuff.

I am also a supporter of the Packers and I think you are right that Packer fans are more than just normal football fans. My support for them, for example, has

nothing to do with geography. I would be a Packer fan if the team had always existed in Florida or Nevada. As long as they are the only community-owned team in professional sports, and completely dependent on, and married to, their fans and their city, I would support them. It is the only kind of ownership arrangement that makes sense to me. Go Packers.

[JG] Anti-abortionists' use of violence makes a certain amount of warped sense. If you accept the assumption that abortion is murder and that women who have abortions are murderers . . . then doctors who perform abortions are mass murderers. Thus the so-called pro-life advocates are "saving" lives, in the long run, by killing abortionists. Chances for dialog decrease, however, when they refuse to discuss their assumptions. Almost everyone would be willing to do something fairly drastic to prevent a murder. I would be willing to shoot a terrorist firing into a crowd. With the same motives, some pro-lifers are willing to shoot abortionists. Few pro-lifers would be willing to shoot a pharmacist dispensing birth control, although there do exist so-called pro-family advocates who believe that all birth control is morally wrong. But my point is that everyone draws the line somewhere and that somewhere varies. The point of pro-choicers, in my opinion, is that when we're talking about a fetus that is still inside of and totally dependent upon another human body, the decision to remain pregnant or not can only be made by the person whose body holds the fetus. Anti-abortionists (which is what I prefer to call them), do not accept the idea of individual's defining their own morality. To me, without that acceptance, there can be no such thing as individual integrity.

On another subject (your lifetime Packers' support) . . . Since the Superbowl makes only the fourth complete football game I have ever watched in my life (the first was the Badger's Rosebowl game; the second and third were the two Packers games that preceded the Superbowl), I'm afraid I'd have to be called one of those rotten "bandwagon jumpers." But that's not what I call myself. I call myself a Fair Weather Fan, and Proud of It. Don't bother me with game scores through the season until the end, when it looks like "our" team might actually be on top. Then I'll pay attention for a while. But if "our" team starts to fumble, I am apt at any moment to lose interest and wander away. I'll wear team colors on the day of the Superbowl, but won't actually invest in branded paraphernalia. Go Packers. But now that's enough of this nonsense till next season. LATE next season, got it?

 © Jim Brooks

[SC] Great zine. I thought every one of your arrows was on the mark in your Big Deal opening piece. I have never been to Toronto either, but they shoot a lot of movies there, so watch your step. I would hate to see you get mowed down as an extra in the next Bruce Willis blockbuster.

I had a few responses to your comments to **Vicki** on Hooters. The difference between Hooters and Chucky Cheeses is that it is hard to figure out how mice as a species can be hurt by the Chucky exploitation. Women, on the other hand, can suffer from being treated as sex objects.

I agree that Hooters is hardly the only chain in this market to feature scantily clad female waitstaff. But they are about the only one that has mounted a national advertising campaign around drawing attention to their "Hooter girls" and the owl/breast connection. Other places talk about their food, many big-screen TVs, cheap beer and, oh yes, our sexy young waitresses. But with Hooters it is hard to remember what else they have there besides lots of breasts.

The problem with Hooters company policies on harassment is that everyone is confused by the mixed messages the company puts out. As Jeanne pointed out last time, they are encouraging customers to view their waitresses as sexy objects available for their pleasure, while warning them not to touch. Even the staff don't understand these contradictions as evidenced by the numerous Hooters harassment suits aimed at, not customers, but other staff.

"On a spectrum with Burger King at one end and walking King Street (prostitution) at the other, they have made their choice." From that point of view, Hooters probably is a pretty good choice. But I think that is a very depressing perspective. Is that all there is for attractive young women in our culture? Hamburger flippers or sex objects? Nude dancers and prostitutes are paid well too, but we still don't consider those good employment choices. Hooters is a much milder form of the same sort of exploitation and we shouldn't be so quick to write it off as OK because it is the best of a bad set of possibilities.

YCT **Michael Rawdon** on the order of pairs, Jeanne and I talked about this and couldn't really come to a consensus. My theory is that the order depends which member of the couple is longest known by the group and/or is viewed as the "mover and shaker" of the couple; *Jeanne* and Scott, *Hope* and Karl, *Andy* and Carrie, *Kim* and Kathi, *Sandy* and Larry, *Bill* and Julie, etc. I don't think Jeanne agreed with me.

[JG] I mostly agree. I think I most often use the name of the person in the couple I knew first. People

in my parent's generation seem to more often use the man's name first, no matter how long they've known the woman. But I've also noticed that some people, including me, switch the order around depending on which member of the couple they're dealing with at the moment. Even though I've known **Diane Martin** for more than 20 years and Jim Hudson for many fewer, I occasionally put Jim's name first, when I expect my focus to be on an interaction with him. That's come up fairly frequently recently with WisCon. The euphony of the combination does not seem to be a big factor for me.

What was Hook's name pre-alligator? I rather think that's a chicken or the egg question. Without the alligator there would be no Hook. Without Hook we would not know of the alligator.

"Reality" seems to be getting you down these days. Not that I don't empathize, of course. But it sounded like you were getting a little down about our focus on Martha Stewart and nose hair depletion. (What a Martha Stewart show *that* would make!) On the other hand, maybe you're just being ironic.

Here's one *what* for Whump?

 © Bill Dyer

[SC] Normally I would have simply ignored your achingly awful Packer/cheese puns, but since you aimed them directly at me in a comment, I must cry "foul." For shame...

[JG] Add Scott and me to the list of unsatisfied AOL-users that are disappointed by iteration number 3. We rarely use AOL access to the Internet because of the frequent busy signals and slow connect time. But we don't have too much trouble getting and sending email. When we first signed on with AOL, there was only one 14,400 bps access phone number in Madison. We chose a much slower access number as our "second choice" phone number which is used whenever our "first choice" number is busy. Well that happens most of the time these days, but our second choice number almost always puts us through—much more slowly than the other, at only 2400 bps, but our call does go through and our flash sessions do get processed. A flash session can take three minutes, but we don't have to keep trying.

 © Lisa Freitag

[JG] I also had a "thing" for Peter Pan. I owned the LP, used to have all the lyrics memorized, read the Barrie book over and over, and watched the Mary Martin version whenever it was on TV. (I have

in fact watched it fairly recently and managed to tape it the last time it was shown.)

But I have a different reason than yours for finding the story so endlessly fascinating. Like you, I was less attracted to the animated version. I think the main reason I liked Mary Martin as Peter (even with the wires clearly visible) more than the cartoon Peter was *because* the actor was a woman, and we all knew it. Mary Martin was a woman pretending to be a boy. Just as your father felt a bit grumpy about the fact that the same actor played both Hook and Father, the gender of the actor who plays the role of Peter is significant. (Apparently many female actresses have played Peter on stage; the casting has a long tradition.) On some level, Hook is supposed to be Father; similarly, on some level Peter is supposed to be a female. All that is lost in the cartoon version and in the later Disney version with Robin Williams (even though I liked what that version had to say about fatherhood).

When I was a kid, I kept thinking about the ever youthful Peter returning generation after generation to Wendy's daughters' nurseries to hear stories. It seemed to me that he was craving something more than just stories, something he couldn't get from the adult Wendies. He flew off, generation after generation, with young Wendy (or whatever her name was). I sometimes dreamed about Peter finally meeting a Wendy that would stay with him or become involved with him.

Later, I realized that what I really wanted to happen (to myself, playing a latter-generation Wendy) was to finally *become* Peter, or at least to admit that part of me is both Peter *and* Wendy. It seems to me now that both Peter and Wendy are incomplete girls. Peter is the "tom-boy" that so many of us chose to be as young girls. Tom-boys play roughhouse with the boys, sneer at dolls and games like playing house, and refuse to wear ruffles and lace. Tom-boys grow up and are expected to "grow out" of that stage and become young women. Wendy, on the other hand, is the docile girl who pretends to be both too weak to play boy games, but ironically takes on a huge amount of responsibility by accepting the role of mother and caretaker in her youth. She dresses up like her mother and takes her mother's place with her younger siblings and other lost boys.

Both Peter and Wendy, it seems to me, reject choices (Peter refuses to grown up, out of tom-boyism; and Wendy accepts the rules that say that girls don't have adventures, they take care of boys and men who have them) As a result, they both yearn toward that part of themselves they deny.

Remember I wrote to **Tracy** how I enjoy, sometimes, re-writing stories in my mind to better fit my sense of the world? Well this is one of those times. I have been endlessly fascinated by the possibility implied by the fact that Peter continues to return to Wendy's daughters' nurseries, looking for something he lost . . . And I don't think it's his shadow. I don't have the least idea whether any of this was meant consciously or unconsciously by Barrie or any of the directors who recreated this story on stage and screen, but it's become the substance of the story to me.

As you say, Peter Pan can be viewed as a story of the restricted roles available for boys, too. It's all very Victorian, which of course is a period when gender definitions were extremely straightlaced, so to speak, and was, of course, when *Peter Pan* was written.

© Jim Frenkel

[JG] I'm always skeptical when people (or myself) talks about "simplifying" their lives. It seems sometimes that life only gets more and more complicated, and that maybe that's the essence of life. But I think it's a Very Good Thing to review, once in a while, the choices one has made.

© Pat Hario

[JG] People are still referring to your six degrees from Kevin Bacon. It occurs to me that I am probably fairly close in degree to a lot of Hollywood type folks as a result of my acquaintance with Harlan Ellison. (We were in frequent phone contact during the struggle to get the ERA ratified, when Phoenix hosted the worldcon and Arizona was boycotted for it's refusal to ratify the amendment. Harlan worked with Susan Wood and me to organize a fannish response at Iguanacon.) Anyway, Harlan Ellison knows virtually every director and producer in Hollywood, so I imagine that I could construct a fairly short list of degrees to most actors. . . I would think the most degrees of separation for most of us would be with non-famous, poor people living in poor countries, who have relatively little contact with anyone but their own family.

© Tom Havighurst

[SC] I think "It's really stupid. Don't watch it sober." would make a great warning sticker on videos. Far more informative than some convoluted rating system. I like it because it doesn't say not to watch it, just advises you to be prepared.

Don't bother to see *Dante's Peak*. The relationships are just as flat and boring as in *Twister*, but less irritating. The movie is all special effects. Good fun if you are up for some explosions and mayhem, but that's all. I learned that coffee beans shouldn't be stored in the freezer.

Rent out a nose hair clipper? You're a pretty strange guy.

[JG] What a thought, Tom. Renting out a nose clipper. You'd have to have a circle of *very* close or *very* weird friends to get into that.

© Hope Kiefer and Karl Hailman

[SC] It is no picnic raising two small children. Unless they were comfortably well-to-do, the couples I know who did this all went through some brief periods of depression. None of them have ever regretted having kids, however.

I would hate to see you give up *Turbo*. I hope you can stay with us. I don't care if you don't write comments, or even if you don't get it all read every month. You have been solid contributors for years and have earned some slack time. Do what you can. I was very unhappy that Kim and Pete dropped out. To me, the apa is more successful as a social group than as a writing group. They weren't contributing much, but I feel that leaving the apa has further isolated them from the rest of us socially.

[JG] I hope you're feeling less depressed about lacking time to do stuff other than kid care. The joys of raising Forrest and DeDe compensate, I'm sure, for some of the activities you've lost or have had to put off for a while. I join Scott in assuring you that we hope you don't drop out of the apa. It's clear that you're struggling to do the best you can and keep up some interaction here. I appreciate whatever you are able to contribute to the apa and hope you stay.

© Andy Hooper

[JG] Very funny, Andy. What a great angle that might make for a book, if you could interlace descriptions of actual Fortean investigations with an allegorical Fortean investigation of your own. That would allow you to make all sorts of comments about the flaws inherent in the investigations, in a truly entertaining manner. The end of your piece inspired a really weird image of **Pat Hario** calling Steve Vincent Johnson and telling him that the Parks Department were announcing that crop circles were hoaxes, and Steve suspecting some vast conspiracy

© Vicki Rosenzweig

[JG] I liked your comment to **Jae** about "the reality of people who are alive on Earth today." You asked, "Do they just need a better storyteller?" Maybe they do. It seems that groups of people in our world get attention *only* when their story is told in a provocative or compelling way. How often have populations been whipped into patriotic support of a war by the well-placed stories of innocent children being slaughtered by malevolent dictators (or torn out of incubators by soldiers)? The AIDS quilt works, I think, on this principle: tell the story, make people realize this is their own story, and open up people's minds. Certainly it's the thing that makes movies such a powerful tool in our society. Americans tell our story all over the world by the export of our films. But if you're not included in any of those movies, you know that your invisibility is reinforced for many people in our culture. Maybe storytelling is one of the most profound things one can do to forge links between groups of people who misunderstand one another in our culture. Maybe storytelling is one of the most profound things one can do to reinforce barriers between groups.

© Georgie Schnobrich

[JG] Your story of the Man Who Won't Go to WisCon (but did and unknowingly talked to the rabidly feminist JB and JG), really got me laughing. It reminded me of **Bill Dyer's** comment about people who assume that he can look into their deepest psyche because of his profession. I realized that I've frequently met folks who assumed that I was constantly making instantaneous judgments on some sort of sexism scale. I didn't know my brother's fiancé, Betsy, very well (but they both knew I didn't intend to get married myself), and I was considerably weirded out when she called me 10 years ago, and asked me if my opinion of her would suffer if she married (as opposed to lived with) Steve.

© Bill Humphries

[JG] It's good to hear that you're making new friends out there. // I wish I'd seen the Power Computing guerrillas.

© Future SC Comments

[SC] I have run out of time and will finish comments on issue #127 next month. —SC & JG, 2/13/96