



# Union Street

A joint zine by Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis

## Hey There!

[SC] John  
Bludorn need two seconds.

We both think he's a really great  
guy. Please help us out and second  
his nomination. Thanks.

I am still finishing reading all of the  
excellent *Turbo* #130 from April. I will be  
commenting on it next month, please bear with me.

Wrapping up WisCon and Tiptree and a rush of post-  
WisCon commitments have sapped much of my time. I  
am determined this month to pick up on my WisCon  
discussion started back in February and deliver com-  
ments on issue #131.

## © Wither WisCon, Part 2

[SC] While in Seattle for Potlatch last March, after  
the publication of Part 1 of this subject, **Andy Hooper**  
buttonholed me at a party to point out that my article had  
been written by others many times before. He reminded  
me that angst over WisCon's future was nothing new and  
WisCon has always survived and  
would continue to do so. He advised  
me to have more faith and step aside  
so the new people could take over. At  
the time, I thought he was amazingly  
(typically?) arrogant for assuming  
he knew more about what was going  
on in Madison from 2000 miles away,  
than I did coming fresh from the  
scene. Yet I also appreciated Andy's  
point of view from the perspective of  
WisCon's long history. Over at least  
the short term, he appears to have  
been more right than I was.

I think we can agree that Wis-  
Con 21 was a success. We had a  
healthy attendance, things ran  
smoothly, we did OK financially,  
and what glitches there were are solv-  
able for the future (the noise from the  
wedding disrupting the play, a little

too much programming, etc.) There appears to be a  
general acceptance that WisCon 22 will happen next  
year. The feeling I get from the group is exactly the sort  
of faith that Andy advised me to adopt; WisCon will  
happen next year, don't worry about it.

Sentiments expressed in the apa since my original  
piece came out ran in interesting directions. **Tracy** frankly  
admitted she no longer has time to devote to working on  
WisCon and would rather see an activist approach taken  
to deciding WisCon's future rather than just letting it die  
away. I agree with Tracy that we should talk now about  
WisCon's future, but I no longer think WisCon is in  
danger of withering away. On the contrary, our refocus in  
recent years on feminism, gender issues and the Tiptree  
Award have helped develop a narrow, but devoted, audi-  
ence of attendees that consider WisCon one of their most  
important cons. As long as we keep our focus, we will  
keep our attendance steady or growing. **Pat** made the very  
good point that the trouble with talking about WisCon's  
future is that our new hotel commitments make it seem  
like we have to volunteer for five years at a time. Yes, I  
think it is hard for us to tell the hotel that we will be doing  
WisCon for five more years without somehow implying  
that we will personally make sure the convention happens  
all that time.

**Michael Rawdon** pointed out that we might not be

doing a good enough job of recruit-  
ing interested people by getting the  
word out that we need help. That is  
a regular, and still completely rea-  
sonable, criticism. **Georgie** hit the  
nail on the head by describing the  
sensation of "being dragged behind  
a running horse." I have often felt  
that. **Julie Zachman** and **Bill Dyer**  
and others expressed support and  
enthusiasm for WisCon. **Hooper**  
weighed back in, in a comment to  
Julie Zachman and reiterated his  
view that the "doomsayers" (that  
would be me) are "misguided" and  
"burnt out" and need to let others  
take over. Finally **Tom Havighurst**,  
who has seen WisCon from a vari-  
ety of perspectives in the last couple  
years, wrote passionately last month  
that WisCon is too big, it is "taxing

This issue of *Union Street* is brought to  
you by Jeanne Gomoll and  
Scott Custis, who live at  
2825 Union Street,  
Madison, Wisconsin 53704.  
608-246-8857  
ArtBrau@aol.com

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our resources" and that he doesn't see people lining up to take on major leadership roles for next year. Sound familiar, Andy?

The biggest organizational snafu at WisCon this year had nothing to do with the concomm. I expected the Tiptree auction and bakesale to bring in around \$1000 to \$2000. Instead we were flooded with over \$6000 in donations and proceeds. I was completely unprepared to handle such an outpouring. Next year I intend to devote myself completely to dealing with Tiptree fund-raising by staffing a Tiptree/WisCon table, better managing the auction and directly overseeing all other fund-raising activities. Andy, take note, Jeanne and I are both stepping well back from the WisCon organizing committee next year.

I am confident that WisCon 22 will happen. I still have no idea who will coordinate, and there are, once again, large holes at the department head level of the committee, yet there seems to be enough general certainty that the con will happen that I am not as worried about it as I was last year. However, that still does not address the question of WisCon's future and the concerns about the convention's long term health that Tom and I have expressed.

I agree that an annual 500+ person convention is sapping the strength of the group as it now exists. Even with extensive outside help, WisCon still requires a coordinator and a significant organizational presence here in town. My feeling is that we should start thinking about ways of keeping WisCon healthy and vibrant, while preventing our own people from becoming burnt out. I think it is time to start talking about doing WisCon every other year, for instance. That would give us plenty of time to rest up and plan, fill holes in the committee, and in addition, a given committee could actually decide for themselves who they wanted to invite for Guests of Honor instead of inheriting last year's committee's choices. I have no idea how doing WisCon every other year would impact on our hotel. They are depending on us to fill their hotel on an otherwise dead Memorial Day weekend, but I think it is still preferable to a possible midyear committee collapse.

Another possibility is allowing other groups around the country to host WisCon from time to time. I recently received an email from Steve Swartz who suggested that the Seattle area would be interested in doing a WisCon should we ever decide to let it travel around.

The Madison group has many good, devoted people who want to help make WisCon happen. But we have never been very good at recruiting or taking care of new volunteers. We aren't likely to get a lot better. I fear that we are going to soon succeed in killing off the enthusiasm of the people we have which could lead to a dramatic

decline in the quality of WisCon, or even threaten the financial viability of the group. We are all getting older and the demands on our time are increasing. Let's accept that and try to figure out how best we can work to keep WisCon one of the very best SF conventions.

Oh, and Kim, who is doing the 4th of July party this year?

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## © WisCon 21 Flashes

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[JG] WisCon happened on the weekend of May 23-26. It turned out I was absolutely useless through most of the following week and weekend, which makes me question the medical theory that one cannot "make up" lost sleep over a long period of time. For about 2 or 3 weeks before the convention I worked at my computer till about 2:30 or 3 am, which left me 3-4 hours of sleep a night. I did OK; I didn't get sick. But it feels to me as if I was making up some of that sleep for about a week after the con with 9-10 hours of sleep every night.

In spite of the sleep depravation I thought WisCon 21 was a great convention . . .

Towards the end of the con, a few moments after Ellen Klages allowed herself to be shaved bald for the benefit of the Tiptree Award fund, one of our Guests of Honor, Melissa Scott, grinned and said, "You know, I used to think that everyone was exaggerating when they talked about WisCon." She promises that she and Lisa will come back next year. The phrases I recall from last year are "the best convention ever!" and "let's do it again!" ... This year I think I'll remember Melissa's incredulous murmur, "I thought they were exaggerating...!"

WisCon has carved itself a niche as the world's premiere feminist SF convention. Well, to be honest, we've always said that, but now the title has become more meaningful in that WisCon seems more like a convention by and for the feminist SF community, whereas in the past, it has been a convention run by the Madison SF community with a focus on feminist SF. This is a very good thing in many ways and risky in other ways. It is good because parts of the Madison SF community are less interested in running a feminist oriented convention than it used to be. The local newspaper, *Isthmus*, refers to us as "venerable" and implies that we've always been here and always will, but really, that's not so. The number of Madison people who work on the convention has steadily decreased throughout the last 5 or 6 years; we absolutely depend upon interest and assistance from outside the local group. It's a good thing that the feminist SF community is recognizing

that we need to have an annual gathering and that we all need to pitch in if it is going to continue to happen. It's a good thing too, that this change in WisCon's organization coincides so neatly with the consolidation of the feminist SF community around the Tiptree Award. Self-awareness is being encouraged from several angles. It is also good in that a greater pool of interest and involvement from outside Madison will tend to keep WisCon's program on the cutting edge of feminist and gender politics. On the other hand, this identity shift may be risky in that if the local group senses that they do not "own" the convention in the same way that they used to, the central organization of WisCon may tend to unravel.

Nevertheless, this year's WisCon was a happy experiment in enlarging the breadth of our con to include more out-of-towners. Of course, it wouldn't have been possible without email. In my own department—Programming—I shared the chair position with Debbie Notkin (San Francisco) who was a delightful, energizing and utterly dependable cochair. We also had Laurie Marks (Boston) on our committee, and despite the fact that for most of the year Laurie didn't expect that she'd be able to afford to travel to the convention, she did a lot of work developing panel ideas and helping to write panel descriptions. At the last moment she received a surprise present from some of her friends—plane fare to Madison and hotel expenses at WisCon—and so she was, in the end, able to moderate a couple of the panels she had conceived. Spike Parsons (Bay Area) and Simba Blood (Minneapolis) ran Programming Ops and the Green Room at the convention.

I do hope, however, that having a premiere feminist SF convention is not seen as an excuse for other conventions to ignore the need for more than the usual, single "Women and SF" panel. After all, even though there are premiere *Babylon 5* conventions, and conventions known for other specialties, like excellent art shows or masquerades, that doesn't stop other conventions from running their own media programming or their own excellent art shows or masquerades. And that's not the way it should be for feminist programming either.

Anyway, enough philosophizing on the nature of WisCon for now. Here are some of my highlights from the convention:

I was bowled over with relief when Debbie and Jim Hudson picked up our Guest of Honor, Susanna

Sturgis, Thursday afternoon at the airport. She hadn't arrived on an earlier flight as planned and when I inquired at the airport ticket desk, they told me that Susanna had canceled both her flight to Madison and her return flight home.

Thursday night, many of us enjoyed a warm and very fun reception for writers attending WisCon at Madison's feminist bookstore, A Room of One's Own. One of the young women clerking that night was anxiously searching the crowd for a glimpse of Melissa Scott. "Is she here yet?" she asked me finally. "She's been here for quite a while," I said and pointed Melissa out to her. "Oh! I was looking for someone wearing a lot of gauze. She looks like a real person!" I burst out laughing. The young woman blushed and begged me not to tell Melissa what she had said.

The evening became more rowdy after the reception when we strolled across the street to the Angelic Brew Pub for dinner and beers, and met up with a gang of people who'd finished stuffing registration packets

back at the hotel. Not everyone finished up their work in time to enjoy the festivities at the Angelic, however. Scott and Greg Noggle were delayed quite a while as they loaded cumbersome art show panels onto trucks and delivered them to the hotel. Scott arrived at the Angelic late in the evening and declined my invitation to introduce him to Melissa, Lisa and Susanna. "No, I'd better go home and take a shower first." He got back soon afterward, finished off my dinner and finally got to make the acquaintance of our guests.

Scott and I got to pick up Mary Doria Russell at the airport and had dinner with Mary and Karen Fowler on Friday. Mary Russell is the winner of (half of) the 1996 Tiptree for her novel, *The Sparrow*. Although she had never been to a con before attending the Florida Conference of the Fantastic Conference (does that count as a con?), where she received her award, she fit into the WisCon milieu immediately. Mary is an extraordinarily extroverted, hugely enthusiastic, utterly delightful person. Scott and I (and most of the rest of the convention, I think) became great fans of hers over the weekend. She'd broken her ankle just a week before WisCon, and so she took on the traditional role of "author-in-wheelchair" that WisCon seems to require each year, but there was no shortage of people eager to wheel her around the hotel, or even down State Street to restaurants. (Saturday evening, as I pushed her to

Quote of the Month #1

***There are two kinds of jobs—boring ones and scary ones.***

—Says DOT office worker to former Mendota Mental Health Institute Aide

the Mideastern restaurant, Kabul's, she suddenly laughed when she noticed the similarity of her position to that of the many babies who were being pushed up and down State Street in strollers. "My people!" she shouted, as she saluted the bemused kids. It was quite a scene.) Mary read excerpts from *The Sparrow* and the already completed sequel to that novel with passion and drama. She's one of the best author/readers I've ever heard. She told us the news about how Anthony Bandaras has purchased rights to *The Sparrow* and that he's going to play the main character's role himself. And then, as an encore, she let herself get completely caught up in the emotional scene of the Tiptree auction at the end of the convention. Two 1997 Tiptree shirts were auctioned, a medium and a small; and unsurprisingly, there were no bids for them. Mary was wearing one of the 1997 shirts, a size large which hung rather loosely on her petite frame. So she offered to trade her shirt with whoever would bid on the small shirt, and—getting into the spirit of the auction—announced that she'd trade shirts with that person right there in the middle of the auction. And she did. As far as I know, no photographs were taken, at Mary's request. Mary's planning to shop for one of those old fashioned, outrageous, pointy "Madanna" bras for next year's auction. Oh yeah, she's coming back (as a taller person) to WisCon 22.

We got this email from Mary a few weeks after the convention: "*I thought you would be amused to know that when I was getting ready for bed last night and peeled my teeshirt off, my husband said, "I feel this strange compulsion to bid on something . . ."*"

What is it about auctions that prompts so much flesh gets revealed so often? It seems to me that it was Luke McGuff's turn at Potlatch this year. At WisCon, auctioneer Ellen Klages courageously offered to bear her *head* for the sake of the Tiptree Fund. She declared a very brief time limit on raising \$500, but said that if it were raised, she'd shave her head bald. And she did, right there in the room where the auction was held. I have pictures and plan to put together a little progressive diorama for benefit of, you guessed it, the Tiptree Fund.

This year's fund raising at WisCon was the most successful so far. Together with T-shirt and bakesale income, the auction raised well over \$5,000 dollars for the fund. Whew!

There was a lot of Tiptree stuff at WisCon in spite of the fact that the award wasn't presented in Madison this year. There was a great panel about the process, with 4 chairpersons out of the 6 Tiptree judging teams participating as panelists. There was

even a Tiptree business meeting, disguised under the name "Secret Mistresses of Tiptree Luncheon." And there was a reenactment of the famous Tiptree ceremony from the Florida conference, where (in honor of the Catholic themes in *The Sparrow*), Pat Murphy, Karen Fowler, Ellen Klages, Delia Sherman, and Mary Russell sang and performed Tom Leher's *The Vatican Rag*. Janet Lafler, who chaired the 1996 panel of judges but who was unable to attend the Florida conference, joined in the fun this year. It was absolutely hilarious.

Nobody can give you an overall feeling for programming quality, because there was so damn much of it, though I heard lots of good comments. I certainly enjoyed all of the panels I was on or was able to attend. The "New Tiptree Cookbook Titles" turned into a mini-workshop and we created an alarmingly long list of often disgusting puns based on Tiptree stories, which we will eventually use as chapter titles in the next Tiptree cookbook. (Cookbook planning will go into full gear after the Tiptree quilt is finally done, which I think and hope will happen sometime this summer. I had the quilt in Scott's and my room for a while and was able to bring a number of people there to show them the work in progress. "Hey, you wanna come to my hotel room and see my quilt?!" No one seemed disappointed to find an actual quilt.)

I moderated the panel called "Jane Austen is as Alien as Mars," and had a lot of fun at both that panel and the Tiptree process panel. I also got to hear Kelley Eskridge read her new novella (not yet in print) and was absolutely mesmerized. Mary Russell's reading, as I said, was wonderful too.

But there were another 130+ programs that I wasn't able to see, and I'm looking forward to reading some of the comments about those, both here in *Turbo* and in the surveys that people filled out at the convention. Things went pretty smoothly from the point of view of Program Ops. There were a few no-shows among the panelists, not many however, and the substitutions we made actually improved the panels in some cases. No panels had to be switched in time or space, which I think was pretty amazing.

Those who went to parties however, probably were able to taste a little of each. We have a unique deal with our hotel: they give us all the suites (not the sleeping rooms) on the 6th floor for free. There are no other large party size rooms in the hotel. So we turn around and lend them to anyone who wants to throw an open party on one of the nights of WisCon. We ended up filling all but three rooms on Sunday

night, and so the sixth floor, as it was last year, turned into a rocking place after programming ended. The thing that has impressed me about parties at WisCon 20 and 21, is that everyone parties together. We certainly encourage it by doling out the party suites to open party-throwers only, but I don't think that explains it entirely. The people that attend WisCon don't see themselves as a subgroup within another convention, so they don't seem to feel that they need to stake some space outside the official WisCon spaces to be together.

When I think about this, and the many other things that distinguish WisCon from other traditional conventions, it makes me feel like we're creating a temporary sanctuary here every year ... a little utopia ... that inspires and invigorates us all. I'm very happy that so many great people come back year after year and I'm really proud of my part in making it happen.

[For a continuation of Jeanne's discussion about WisCon and the Madison SF group, see her comments to **Barb Jensen** (*Turbo* 130) and **Pat Hario** (*Turbo* 131)]

## Comments on No. 130

### © Clay Colwell

[JG] Congratulations on the raise, Clay. I don't think people generally take offense at someones' delight in their good fortune unless that person defines their good fortune in relation to other people's success. A person, for instance, who thinks of themselves as a success if they make more money than their friends, or who thinks of themselves as a failure—no matter how much they have—if they have less than their neighbor, these are the folks who offend by their preening (or grumbling). You don't do that.

You describe the experience of getting a massage as conducive to productive thought. My own best state-of-being for productive thinking is movement. When I'm walking or biking or simply active in a mindless sort of way, my thoughts start jumping and sliding around in ways that turn up some unusual combinations. So, when I'm stuck with a problem at the computer or blocked about a design idea, it's best, sometimes, not to sit staring at the screen or the paper. I may have better luck if I get up and move. (Of course, that's the same impulse I get when I'm procrastinating, too, and sometimes my brain lets me rationalize escape as a creative move.)

In response to my reasons for supporting the availability of abortion (i.e., that the choice belongs to the person whose body's life supports the fetus), you were moved to wonder "*what might happen if a very young fetus could be supported to term outside the womb ... [through the] 2nd- or 3rd [trimester].*" Good SF question, based upon a fairly realistic possibility. It would be interesting to consider this even further. What if it became possible to extract the smallest fertilized ovum from a woman's womb and to support its growth within an artificial womb? Would the woman have the right to actually prevent the transfer of the fetus into an incubator that could sustain its life apart from her body? If that technological advance happened, I would probably support the woman's right to make the final choice about whether or not to allow transfer, especially if there was any risk whatsoever to the woman in the course of the operation that would be necessary to remove the fetus. But if that transfer took place, whether as a result of her choice or the state's, I believe I would expect that the mother and the father would at that point jointly have custody both be held legally responsible for its financial support.

I never was able to desensitize myself to contact lenses. I tried over and over again for a month, and they continued to irritate me outrageously. I ended up throwing them out and later talking to my optician who said that some people never do get used to them. He'd never mentioned that possibility before I got contact lenses.

### © Bill Dyer

[JG] What is a borderline personality? I'm afraid I haven't got a clue, but I keep visualizing a cowboy...

### © Jim Frenkel

[JG] Your mention of talking to Vernor Vinge on the phone made me remember that you said quite a while ago that he was working on a sequel to *Fire Upon the Deep*. What happened to that book? Can we still expect it?

### © Karl Hailman

[JG] Sorry you didn't get to be on the Political Parties panel. By the time you mentioned it in the apa, the final program list had been drawn up, and that panel had been dropped for lack of interest. It's possible that, had you filled out a programming questionnaire earlier and mentioned an interest in this topic, things might have turned out differently.

Everyone should remember to send in a questionnaire (or ask for one if you haven't been on programming in the last couple years) if you want to be on a panel next year.

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© Bill Hoffman

[JG] Planting Brussels sprouts in Oregon?? All the farmers I've talked to at the farmers market say you have to have one or two hard freezes to make the sprouts taste good. Certainly that seems true from my own taste tests: the sprouts picked early in the Fall before a hard freeze don't taste anywhere near as good as those picked later. I haven't heard that blood sacrifices help much.

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© Andy Hooper

[JG] *Turbo* is "a remarkably touchy-feely apa"?? Whoa. That's hard to take from someone living in the touchy-feely capital of fandom! During our visit to Seattle last winter, Scott had to remind folks that he prefers Midwest hugging rules (for example: No good-bye hugging between friends for minor leave-takings, i.e., periods of time shorter than 1 month.). Seriously, I don't find this apa very much more oriented toward conversation than others I've belonged to, but then I guess I have never been interested in an apa for any other reason except its ability to support conversation, so I suppose those are the only ones I've ever seriously considered.

Excellent essay, Andy. I hope that you will soon send some of this stuff out to publishers! It seems to me that you could get an editor interested in this with one or two chapters and an outline. Get it out while the topic is hot!

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© Bill Humphries

[JG] I'm a little worried about you, Bill. Toning down your feelings about the dangers of nuclear power because the industry folks you've met are nice, is a dangerous path. Demonizing individuals and groups is always a bad idea no matter how evil the enterprise, and on that level, I think it's good that we all realize that people who make decisions are all just that, people, not monsters. But there are still monstrous acts which are not diminished in their bad effects, even if the guy who pushes the button means well. This is the argument I have with my brother and father all the time: they both work, or have worked with, high level managers and CEOs whose corporate policies are criticized by the left.

Their basic argument always comes down to, "I know the people who work there. I know the people who make decisions. They're nice people. They're people like you and me." I don't doubt it. That's even scarier, in the end, than if the CEOs were aliens manipulating our society to hurry its collapse. These are folks like you and me doing things that are bad for other people and the environment.

Yes, both nuclear plants and coal burning do bad things to the environment. We should be looking for alternatives to both of them, and we need to stop burying ticking time bombs in the earth until and unless we learn how to prevent their toxins from leaking into the earth and the water systems.

I think you made a really interesting comparison between religious cults and Ponzi schemes on the Internet. I generally close the door after one or two sentences when religious proselytizers come calling. I've learned similar behavior in reaction to email advertisers. After my initial disgust at reading all those ads when we first got email, and after I realized that asking to be removed from individual mailing lists didn't help much, I started just dumping any email addresses that appear, from their subject lines, to be ads. I've probably lost one or two personal emails from friends who unfortunately typed an ad-like phrase into the subject line. But I'm more worried that the advertisers will eventually wise up and start putting innocuous subject lines on the top of their emails, just like some snailmail advertisers put their material into plain, seemingly hand-addressed envelopes, to trick us into opening their piece rather than tossing it out unread. Actually, some emailers have already learned this trick. There are a couple of porn advertisers who regularly use subject lines like, "Hi!" or "Party!" and lure me into actually opening their email. But mostly they stand out for the use of all upper case letters and the usual financial or sexual come-ons.

Thanks for reprinting *Heavengate*. A great cartoon.

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© Barbara Jensen

[JG] Lisa lets you use the name, "Billy Bob," and live?? Has she mellowed on that nickname for William?

I grin every time I hear fannish references to my article in that longago issue of *Rune*, written in the style of an investigative journalist, and "revealing" the amazing truth of Minneapolis meetings that turn into parties vs. Madison parties that transmogrify into meetings. For most people, the fanzine article

that is the source of this truism has been forgotten, but the conclusion has gained the status of mythic truth. Actually, if I was writing the article today, I probably wouldn't come to the same conclusion. Minneapolis meetings may indeed still transmogrify into parties, but parties in Madison rarely turn into meetings anymore. I have occasionally seen the mood turn silently ugly when a mention of WisCon or sometimes even apa business is made at large gatherings. Most people seem to avoid the subjects. Meetings are no longer among the highlights of social activities in Madison fandom. In fact, many members of Madison fandom avoid WisCon meetings like the plague and I've been corrected sternly when I have referred to Wednesday nights at Nick's as a "meeting." It's not a meeting, **Jim Nichols** has told me firmly. I think he prefers to call it a gathering, but I may not be remembering his label correctly; I keep calling it a meeting like we used to, even though I've largely stopped attending. There's too much small talk, too often with people I'm not really interested in talking with (which refers to no one in this apa, of course). I don't know, if more meeting-like stuff happened on Wednesday night, I might be tempted to start going again. Let me explain...

For someone like me that actively searches out friendships that also involve the sharing of work on some sort of project, the change in Madison fandom (from a group that turns parties into meetings) may have made it less interesting. Everyone in the Madison group has seen me make faces when meetings turn into one-upmanship games based on Robert's Rule of Order; on the other hand, I have thrived on group friendships whose members share a goal of *making something*. I've been most involved with SF<sup>3</sup> friendships when we've worked together to publish *Janus*, *Aurora*, and WisCon. Smaller projects have energized my interest and enjoyment as well. This past year has been a good one for me in that I've grown closer to the folks on the Programming committee. Most of the people who volunteered to be on this committee, however, came from the book discussion group at Borders Book Store; the others

were from out-of-town. I almost feel as if we are in the beginning stages of forming a *new* group. We did a lot of work together, got to know one another through that work, and grew to trust and depend upon one another. I like this sort of experience, and notice that I tend to seek it out.

It seems to me, Barb, that you also like the kind of energy that is brewed when a group of friends creates art together. Your descriptions of making music with friends, even your exciting and luminous description of this year's Minicon gives me a taste of that.

Great quotation from Noam Chomsky. ("A language is a dialect with an army and navy.")

You write about your apa-writing philosophy, "that what one writes to an individual is not just to that person but the whole apa." Absolutely. I share your philosophy on that. Obviously, those paragraphs

up there about the Madison SF group are addressed to more people than just you.

Ever since you brought up the subject and asked me whether I considered myself coming from a middle or working class background, I have been mulling over what you've had to say about class. You know, it's really complicated. Class has never been a factor that I considered much when thinking of my family, but when I turn that lens upon it and my history, many things suddenly look different. So I have to thank you for that ... for giving me the chance to see things from a different perspective. One surprising revelation I've had while thinking about this is that my rocky relationship with my mother may be more due to the stress of class issues than with the typical conflicts common to all mothers and daughters, or even with gender issues, which is how I have more frequently characterized them.

My family was, I think, a working class family until the mid-1960s, when my dad accepted a promotion that basically moved him from a skilled artisan job to a salesman/management position. Both he and my mom's families were working class; neither had gone to college, both of them were used to a hard struggle financially. Dad worked two jobs and often two shifts just to pay the mortgage, grocer-

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Quote of the Month #2

*Spring in Wisconsin is the time of year when Mother Nature forgets to take her lithium. Two days of sleet follow two days of warm, sunny days follow two days of dagger-like cold.*

*It makes you do irrational things. The meltdown to madness, like the season itself, is a slow process. It starts with innocent little errors in judgment, like getting your bike out too soon. But before long you're doing certifiably crazy stuff . . . the kind of things people in movies do right before someone slaps them in the face.*

—Andy Moore, *Isthmus*



ies, and other bills, and I recall many arguments between my parents that indicated it wasn't always certain that they'd be able to make the necessary payments. Things changed, however, when Dad was promoted—sometime during my high school years. I remember Mom being very nervous about doing the kind of socializing that Dad wanted her to do with him and his coworkers and clients. Mom was always worried that she'd feel uncomfortable about her clothing or manners. Once when Dad wanted to throw a party at our house, the two of them had an awful argument with mom saying that she didn't have the proper dishes to serve hors d'oeuvres upon, and because of it, she'd be too embarrassed to throw a party. She ended up buying some really strange, ugly dishes that spent most of their lives in the basement after their one outing

at this party. Mom never did get comfortable with the more well-off types of people who were dad's coworkers and clients, but preferred socializing with a few old friends, and mostly members of her large, extended family. As a result, they rarely entertained at our house and Dad seldom asked her to join him at business affairs. But for years, she complained when Dad went off on exotic trips that were offered as perks from his job and entertainments for his clients. So one year, Dad put everything on the line at work, and demanded that these trips be offered to spouses. He came home bubbling over with happiness to tell Mom the news: that she'd be able to go with him on the next trip—to the Caribbean! I remember this clearly. Mom looked vaguely uncomfortable, and finally walked over to the wall calendar, flipped a few pages and checked the date. "Oh, I can't go; that's the date of my bowling tournament." And that was that; she never went on one of those trips and never complained about those trips again.

Mom and I had the normal, mother-daughter arguments when I was in high school, though there wasn't all that much to argue about since I wasn't interested in dating and was pretty much a book-worm/nerd. It was also the 60s, and the times intensified all intergenerational tensions. In any case, there were plenty of "typical" reasons why we didn't get along very well. Things started getting really bad for us, however, when I declared my intention to go on to college. (This is where I find your questions about class so interesting.) I think that at that point, Mom may have realized that I was moving outside of the class to which she perceived she belonged. She

and Dad had already told me that I couldn't expect financial assistance from them. But I saved my money, worked 2 or 3 jobs every summer, and went anyway. Mom was harshly critical of a favorite teacher of mine I had as a freshman and sophomore while I was commuting to a nearby college. Ms. Dean took me and a couple other students in her class under her wing in a very Jean-Brodyish kind of scenario. She took us to concerts and plays and operas and we met at her home for literary discussions. Mom absolutely hated her, but would never

discuss the reasons. When I went away to college in Madison, I wrote long, ecstatic letters home talking about the books I was reading and the amazing classes and ideas that were changing my life. Mom never responded to any of them. Years later, Julie told me that Mom

hadn't even read my letters. I find it interesting to think that maybe it was a perceived class issue more than anything else that alienated me from my mother. In recent years, since Dad's retirement, she seems to have grown more comfortable with a variety of interests and there is less tension between Mom and me, but I avoid visits longer than a day, and the feeling of tension remains close to the surface when we talk.

So now (after the thinking you inspired) I think that I grew up, first, in a working class family, whose fortunes improved so that eventually it worked itself up to the lower rungs of the middle class. Because I was educated in high schools and colleges among other students who were firmly ensconced in the middle class, I learned the mannerisms, assumptions and style of the middle class, and partially as a result of that education, became alienated from my mother who viewed the changes in my life as a betrayal of her.

You ask interesting questions, Barb.

As a result of this line of thought, I absolutely agree with you and **Kathleen King**, that there are behaviors, assumptions and manners understood and recognized within the various class levels. I struggle, however, with the implication that some of the behaviors of the middle and upper classes are "secret" from middle and lower classes. I think it is more likely that the upper and middle class are unaware of the styles of the lower class; and that the lower classes are quite familiar with the styles of the classes above them. How does that old saying go? That slaves must be far more educated in the

Bumper Sticker of the Month #1

**Forget about  
World Peace.  
Visualize using  
your turn signal**



behavior of their masters, because their survival depends on this knowledge. This idea has often been used to support the idea that women tend to be far more aware of men's needs than visa versa, and I tend to believe it. It seems to me that this rule-of-thumb works in terms of class differences, too.

I like your dream of writing a fake monologue for Gertrude. Maybe we need more than that, perhaps a *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* version of *Hamlet*, from the point of view of the King's widow. I bet we could imagine all sorts of interesting events and motivations that weren't considered important from the points of view of the rulers of the country. Really. I'd love to see this done.

**Michael Rawden** says in *Turbo* 131 that he didn't assume you were anti-choice, but I shared the impression you had that he was arguing against the anti-choice position *and* against you. Apparently we were both wrong about that, but it got me to thinking about how frequently we all categorize others in this argument as either being *for* or *against* with no shades of gray in between. I still see no way to compromise on the basic pro-choice demands, but I think I do understand a little bit about what you've been trying to say about the various shades of gray that get forgotten in this debate. There are, as you've pointed out, women who do not believe in abortion for themselves but who support the rights of other women to make that choice for themselves. And there are plenty of people on both sides of the debate who would support much more information and services about contraception being made available to people in an effort to avoid the potential need for abortions in the first place. But the reason I do not consider it reasonable to consider compromise is that the pro-choice position *already* accommodates and *already* accepts all these shades of gray. There are no positions that the pro-choice opposes except one: that any woman should be prevented from making her own choice. All pro-choicers would be willing to work towards universally available contraception, and in fact, doing this would not be a compromise at all for a pro-choicer. It would, however, be a compromise for extremists in the anti-abortion movement. A pro-choicer would not be compromising any part of their position to support the idea that women and children be aided with services or adoption options if the mother did not want to abort. Such a program might be favored by many on the anti-abortion side as well. But for some anti-abortionists, such a program would be a failure unless it was enforced upon all pregnant women. Again, there is no need for compromise on the part

of the pro-choice position in these gray issues; they are gray because they are matters of individual choice. The only possible compromises that actually impinge upon the core of the pro-choice position involve rescinding some womens' rights to choice. If we compromise we will have to decide whose rights to give up. Shall we rescind the rights of very poor women? of very young women? of white women? of black women? of third-trimester pregnant women? of criminal women? No, in my opinion, there is no group nor any individual whose rights can be compromised.

"Meat in Space." What a hoot!

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© Diane Martin

[JG] The garage sale sounds fun. I hope Scott and I will be included on the invitation list.

It's been great fun watching your plans for the additions to the Shorewood house grow more detailed. After reading the article in last week's *Isthmus* about how difficult it is to get variances for additions on urban Madison lots, I am wondering if you had to get a variance and if so, whether it was difficult.

Wow, what courage, volunteering your kitchen for a **Hoffman** feast! You can't back out now, it's in black and white, and we all have copies...

Because you and **Ruth Merrill** both published your zines on white paper, and because your full page illustration seemed to bleed into Ruth's half-page illustration, and because Ruth's zine's title disappeared into the stapled margin, I thought at first that the flying woman was supposed to be you, doing an aerial reconnaissance over Madison's west side. It was a weird moment.

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© Ruth Merrill

[JG] I have moments of panic while flying like you describe, though for the most part I enjoy it fairly well. I lose it when I think about the actual physics of flying and consider the theory I learned in high school. It all falls apart then; I suddenly realize that I have never really believed that theory and here I am risking my life for it. It goes better only if I can put myself in an SF frame of mind, and think of my trip like a science fiction novel, for which one usually has to accept at least one fairly outrageous idea or theory or machine. "Given that..." and then everything should, in a good SF story, follow logically thereafter. OK, I say, assume this machine can fly... Another way to say it is to believe, temporarily, in magic, and then everything goes fine. In fact, it

seems as if you were doing that transformational sort of stfnal thinking when you dressed up as a different person from your Madison mom identity and took on a different persona in Philadelphia. Good story, by the way. Thank you!

I once hailed a cab in Madison and it worked! I was amazed. I'd gotten the time of a doctor's appointment wrong and I was 10 blocks away from the clinic, on foot, when I realized that I only had 5 minutes to get there. I looked up and there was a cab driving toward me. I raised my hand and yelled, "Cab!" and was absolutely stunned when it did a U turn and rolled to a stop beside me.

"You stopped," I said.

"You hailed," the cabbie said.

"But I thought you had to telephone ahead for cabs in Madison."

"That's what everyone thinks," he sighed.

It is funny how hailing a cab seems like one can only do it in a big city.

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### © Lynne Ann Morse

[JG] Your story about getting a C- for a lit class paper reminded me of a paper for which I got a "D" in history class in my junior high school year. This was a bit of a stunner, since like you, I was used to considerably higher grades. It turned out that most people got very low grades for this first paper, partially to shock us into listening to instructions. I had written in the style that had netted me mostly A's and B's in literature courses, and had ignored my history teacher's explicit instructions to stick to the facts within an essay form: no adverbs, no adjectives unless absolutely essential for conveying factual information. State your premise and prove it by siting historical events and actual statements of people involved in the events. I sweated over the next paper to avoid making the same mistakes and was rewarded with a much better grade on it. Anyway, I was thinking that this method worked really well for me; it shocked me out of my complacent expectation of a good grade and forced me to listen very carefully and work very hard. But maybe it didn't work very well for people who were dealing with self-esteem issues. I'd sort of like to look back on that classroom now, and see it through adult eyes.

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### © Michael Rawdon

[JG] Amazing. We agree pretty much on *The Sparrow*. I was surprised not so much by Sandoz's

rape. I guess I expected something like that to happen, though not by the very being who sang such gorgeous music and was overheard via radio waves. What surprised me the most was the revealing of the ecological balance between herd animals and predators, and the way this relationship continued even after both species had gained intelligence and culture. What I most admired about the structuring of that surprise on Russell's part, was how fairly she played. (Mary laughed happily at that. "I know, I know!" she said. "I made sure I didn't cheat and hold crucial information out.") It was all there in the novel, the fact that Sandoz is diagnosed with scurvy when he is "rescued," but is living with a vegetarian race through most of the novel. Jana'ata's anger when he smells the human's stove cooking meat and the fact that he relaxes when he finds out just what they are cooking (not Runa).

I guess I'm still not being very clear about my agreement with your art teacher about putting other colors into a painting of a white sock. I'm not suggesting that you should have tried painting in an abstract manner. What I'm saying is this. A white sock (or a white anything) in a normal room with normal light, is not really white. Its surface will naturally reflect colors from objects and light sources around it. To paint a sock white in that situation is to pay more attention to the fact that you "know" that sock to be white, and to ignore what you are really seeing. There is a school of painting called naturalism which uses this point of view consciously. Grandma Moses is a famous painter of naturalist art. For instance a table seen at a certain perspective may seem to have only 3 legs. However, the naturalist painter paints in all four because she/he "knows" there are four legs. Naturalist paintings' main characteristic is a flat perspective. However, I suspect that what your teacher was urging you to do was to ignore what you know and paint what you see. This is a very common lesson taught to beginning drawing students. Unless the instructor had placed special lights in a precise arrangement around the sock so that reflected color was counteracted on the surface of the sock, you should have been able to observe many colors in that sock, no matter how purely white was the yarn used to knit it. If one of your classmates had worn a yellow shirt, for instance, and had moved toward or away from the sock, you should have been able to observe a subtle shift of very faint yellow upon the sock's surface. Ironically, if you had been able to reproduce those very subtle shades of reflected color, the result would have been extremely realistic.

The challenge of actually painting the color that one sees momentarily when the light and adjacent objects make the subject look different than it did just an instant before, is the life work of many great painters, and is also the subject of the song "Finishing the Hat," in Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George*. George is Georges Seurat whose painting style (Pointillism) used dots of color to create the illusion of solid color. The hat in question was not painted with dots of red paint, but by a various palette of colors all applied in dots. This was not really an abstract style at all, but a way to create an image that provided the closest approximation to the way the brain sees color: it averages multitudes of color in one area and calls it one color. Georges could easily have been "painting the sock" in that scene from Sondheim's play, and it would have taken him just as many weeks to get it right.

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© Vicki Rosenzweig

[JG] You wrote about house layouts and the tendency for modern folks to look for more privacy than they have in the past: *"The best I can do at the moment is to observe that if the only rooms with doors are bedrooms and bathrooms, people who want privacy are likely to spend a lot of time sitting on beds and toilets."* Scott and I went to Madison's "Parade of Homes" two weekends ago (which is a show run by builders to display their newest designs) and strolled though many hugely expensive homes. It's kind of fun seeing how the rich live. Also these shows suggest hints about trends in building and the sorts of things we might find in our own homes should we move to a different house 20 years from now. The houses we looked at in this parade were BIG. You know, the kind of house with a private bathroom for every bedroom. The kind with a formal living room, a family room, and also something they're now calling a "great room." They all have open layouts, but there are so many sorts of rooms for sitting around in, plus dens and offices, that every person in the family could basically have their own space to relax in outside of their bedroom and private bath.... At one of these houses, we saw a master bedroom suite which included the normal gigantic bedroom, gigantic bathroom with huge tub and separate shower, two enormous walk-in closets, AND a little parlor with giant screen TV, comfy

love seat/chaise, and a kitchenette! This master bedroom suite is accessed through a set of double doors, and the impression I got was that the "masters" could basically retreat into their suite for a very long time without ever needing to venture out into the rest of the house. It seems we're just getting more grandiose in our needs for privacy.

I think your theory that we're always looking for acceptable, universally agreed-upon villains is absolutely dead on. Human beings have a long habit of painting entire nations and races of people as demons and blaming all the wrongs of the world and ourselves on these useful bad guys. One of the most interesting books I ever read was one I picked up at my brother's house many years ago ... and have never been able to find

since then, and so I don't know its title or author. But it was about the evolution of the image of Native Americans as described in children's text books. In early colonial days, Indians were described with such words as "noble" and "wise." As time went on, and as immigrant Americans killed more and more Native Americans, the apparent human quotient of the native population dropped precipitously. By the time Custer's soldiers were wiped out at Little Big Horn, Native Americans were described in grade school textbooks as little more than animals. I imagine that a similarly interesting book might chart the perceived image of homosexuals through history, textbooks, or fiction. And I think you're also right about the "tittillation" factor in demonization. If one is going to describe the evil doings of demons, violence and sexual depravity are natural themes and pretty entertaining, too, especially if one denies the existence of either of these things in so-called "civilized" society.

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© Georgie Schnobrich

[JG] Your reaction to Tracy's essay on Frank Lloyd Wright made me wonder if Wright was perhaps a person whose whole esthetic was totally based on visual perception. He had no patience for people who wanted his buildings or furniture to "feel good" as well as look good. It would be interesting to find out if he was equally impatient with complaints of inadequate acoustics. Tracy did you read anything about that?

About your lack of fascination for babies you say, *"This is a dangerous confession to make, since*

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Bumper Sticker of the Month #2

**Very funny, Scotty.  
Now, beam down  
my clothes.**

*in this society, if you're a woman and you're not militantly FOR babies you must be AGAINST them..*" Like you, I've never had any regrets about not having kids. If anything, I frequently feel a huge rush of relief when I observe the lives of women and men which do include children. I am suddenly and sharply aware that I have made the right decision for myself (Sort of the opposite of that "dull ache" **Hope** described). Hope reminds us that the majority of folks in the Madison SF group have chosen not to have children, but most of us, I think, are quite aware—from our upbringing and experience with people in the rest of the world, that we're decidedly NOT the norm. Sometimes I worry that if the religious right wing nuts grab enough power, some of our choices might turn out to be literally dangerous to ourselves. Sigh. On the other hand, and in a much more humorous vein which is certainly much more fun than dwelling on scenarios like *that* . . . All I can say is that it's a good thing that folks were doting on cats and not kids when I was a young fan and reacted with the *Dead Cat through History* slideshow. Whew.

So, are you asking me to read Tepper's novel, *Decline and Fall* to help you figure out where you fall on the Laura Spiess—Jeanne Gomoll Spectrum of Literature? I might read it if Tepper were to attend WisCon, but I think I've had enough of her writing for a while, otherwise. There is stuff in all her novels that I love, and so reading her books isn't a totally bad experience; but there is always a whole lot of other stuff that should have been edited out. It's my opinion that she simply writes too much, too fast, with too little editing. She's got some fascinating ideas, and if you read all her novels as a whole, you can see that she's gradually working out some fairly grandiose themes, the largest one being about how a Gaia-like godhead tends to spring out of any physical world when intelligent beings inhabit it. The "god" that results is a combination of the people and their environment. She's also got some fairly interesting things to say about gender. I was most impressed by the Siamese twins in *Sideshow* whose genitalia were edited so that one was raised as a male and the other as a female. And of course, there's the separatism stuff and her theory that women and men can't really coexist and that the best situation—until we've figured out this sexism stuff—is for men and women to live in communities near one another but not together. This pops up in

her books several times. And then there is the stuff about myth and archetype. I would like to see her work one or two of these themes out in one book—to ask questions, suggest theories and work out the ideas in plot and character. Some authors write books with cliffhanger plots; Tepper writes books with cliffhanger themes, and if you want to know

what else she thinks about these ideas you've got to read the next book. (It's an amazing thing, actually; I can't think of anyone else who writes in quite this way.) But it's a little bit exhausting, and I can't help but think that it's sloppy writing. It seems to me that if she'd slow down a little, and maybe outline a book before she starts out,

and do a couple more rewrites, that she'd be able to tighten up her prose, and possibly be able to write a classic. The closest she's come, in my opinion is *Gate to Women's Country*.

Bumper Sticker of the Month #3

**Warning: Dates in  
Calendar are  
closer than they  
appear.**

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© Jae Adams

[JG] Funny, I thought it was *me* who told you about the Potlatch published notes and tried to provoke you with a threat that we would ask you to mimeograph notes all the panels at WisCon... I guess it didn't work.

I've logged onto Dave Howell's book project, Alexandria ([www.alexlit.com](http://www.alexlit.com)). I spent several hours rating hundreds of books (fabulous, excellent, really good, so-so, boring, horrible, or unread). I ended up putting in quite a few authors and titles he didn't have on his list—mostly women authors, a lot of Tiptree shortlisters. After a while, I became convinced that I was being asked to rate books and stories in the order in which they were originally entered into the system. So, most of the early pages of ratings were comprised of big-name guy writers, with a couple exceptions like Le Guin and C. J. Cherryh. Anyway, I suspected, as I rated, that there were not going to be a whole lot of raters in this system that would tend to match the kind of SF reading that I tend toward, but I kept an open mind. Then when I asked for recommendations—which Dave's program creates by comparing my ratings with other people's ratings, and suggesting books that were liked by others who share a high percentage my likes and dislikes—the program only came up with 20 books. The suggestions with the highest confidence ratings were 5 Tolkien novels. I would guess that I got these because I rated a few other SF "classics" fairly high.

However, it turns out that I've never been able to get into Tolkien's writing, though I've tried several times, so these are bad recommendations for me. The program only suggested two woman writers to me: Lois McMaster Bujold's *Memory and Mirror Dance*, and Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising*. Maybe I should give Bujold another chance, but I've found her novels fairly predictable and without much depth. Do you know anything about Susan Cooper? I can't remember hearing her name. Other books recommended were 4 by Neil Gaiman which I intend to check out (*Season of Mist*, *Brief Lives*, *The Doll's House*, *Good Omens*), also, *Bridge of Birds* by Barry Hughart (who??), Gene Wolfe's *The Citadel of the Autarch* and *The Sword of the Lictor*; Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* (which I've heard about and have no desire to read), Roger Zelazny's *Lord of Light*, and Shakespeare's *King Lear*. I don't think Dave's program has got my number yet. On the other hand, maybe as more people log on and enter their ratings the system will become more useful.

You write that you find it discouraging to hear that the net is being used to catch up on *Babylon 5* synopses. "just a teensy bit like having a secretary who can type 120 wpm & take shorthand, and sending her out to pick up your lunch (of course she doesn't mind)" I think I may have given you the wrong idea about this particular web site. It's a fairly amazing example of how much information can be cross-referenced and organized in a wonderfully useful format. (The synopses comprise the least interesting and useful part of the information provided.) If this site gets used just to demonstrate how various areas of expertise can be put onto the web and made useful to a variety of research needs, it will be well worth it. But, I realize now, that I can't describe it very well here. A linear text stream like this paragraph is can't do justice to the interlaced and interlinked pages of the *Babylon 5* page, or other well-designed web sites. I hope you get a chance to see some of this stuff sometime.

Thanks for the comments on my *Peter Pan* theory. What an interesting question about whether men/boys find this story as compelling as so many women/girls do. I hope some of the guys in this apa comment.

I think Matt has figured out the motivations of exotic pet owners to a "T." It's the Emperor-has-no-clothes situation: the kid sees through to the truth.

I'm glad to hear that you're pouring energy into the Milwaukee calligraphy class. I look forward to eventually seeing some of your work influenced by those experiences.

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### © Tracy Benton

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[JG] I also experienced a twinge while watching Branagh's *Hamlet*, when Ophelia's suicide was announced. Knowing it was supposed to be deathly cold outside, my mind immediately created a sort of *Roadrunner* image of the suicide scene: a frozen pond with a dark silhouette of Ophelia—limbs spread-eagled—indicating the place in the ice where she'd broken through. Not the point in the movie where one wants to dissolve into giggles.

Speaking of giggling, thanks for all the bar jokes. We missed the most recent *Prairie Home Companion* show of jokes, although we heard the first one last year. I hope we get to hear this year's version eventually in rerun.

Wonderful trip report, Tracy. Thanks.

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### © Bill Bodden

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[JG] That's an amazing tattoo you described, Bill. What will you do when you want to show it off, disrobe completely? or will the art in its entirety be a secret between you and certain intimates?

I certainly wouldn't argue if anyone proposed doing WisCon once every two years. In fact, in doing WisCon 20 where we had formed the committee at the end of WisCon 18, I felt that two years of lead time provided the ideal amount of time for putting together a convention. However, I imagine that if we switched to a two year schedule, folks might not get around to starting work on it till a year or less before the date. So I am uncertain whether switching to a two year schedule would have a really good effect on WisCon or if it would simply kill it off.

As for threatening the Concourse with plans to move to the Convention Center, that would be a Bad Plan. The Concourse knows how much we spend for program space in its hotel (0, zilch, nothing, totally free), and it knows how very very expensive it would be for us to have to rent space at the Convention Center, for which we would not be offered any trade for roomnights. Also, the Convention Center's contract would probably have many more penalty clauses than the Concourse contract does. This would be a bluff that we would loose bigtime. Our relationship with the Concourse is extraordinarily good right now; we've got lots of ideas for avoiding the hassles we had this year with the wedding. It could all be very easy and comfortable for WisCon next year. Our current contract just means we have to have our act together by a certain date. I think we should also put a comparable clause into the contract holding the

Concourse to its promises, but basically the contract is not unfair to us.

Wow, you make me really want to see the Winchester House. I've read about it in Michaela Roessner's novel, *Vanishing Point* but your description of it removes it from fantasy to the real world, which makes it, ironically, even more fantastic.

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### © Vijay Bowen

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[JG] Ellen Klages says she usually gets sick just before she goes on long vacations. Not me, but my computer at work almost always experiences major problems just before I'm gone for a long period of time. My computer and I are perhaps too co-dependant. The reason I bring this up is that my most recent pre-vacation computer failure sounds a bit like your computer's restarting malady. Just one day before I took off for a week around WisCon, my work computer started quitting (entirely shutting off) without being commanded to do so. It seemed to do it only when I left my desk for more than a half hour; I'd come back and my monitor would be dark. "What the...?" I'd sputter. My computer was experiencing some network problems too, and I'd made an appointment with a Mac technician to visit my computer during WisCon weekend. It turned out that the networking problem was a minor one, but that the shut down thing was a big problem. In fact, when I got back to work the Wednesday after WisCon, I discovered that they had to replace the motherboard... (The bad news was that the back-up that the Mac technician had put onto a portable hard drive was lost when that hard drive crashed, and I was left only with a backup I'd done a week and a half before. Thus, I lost almost two weeks worth of work. \*sigh\* The good news was that the new motherboard turned out to be the most recent upgrade of the top-of-the-line PowerMac, so I came back to work to a faster Mac with a slight case of amnesia.)

## Comments on No. 131

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### © Cover

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[SC] Once again, **Georgie**, you have produced for us an interesting, thought provoking and beautiful cover. I definitely support your doing a calendar project of your *Turbo* cover designs. I keep thinking how stunning this cover would be if it were in color.

[JG] I agree. It's lovely.

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### © Kim Nash (Business Pages)

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[SC] Re: collating sequence, well hell Kim, you have already announced a definite end date for your term as OE, you have nothing to lose, why don't you just collate with your favorite zines first and least favorite at the end? That would be interesting. And lively.

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### © Lisa Freitag

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[SC] Very entertaining piece on the May Day Celebration in Powderhorn Park. I notice that it started the year I graduated from high school which seems like a very long time ago to me. It all sounds wonderful and I am sure I would go every year too if I lived in the area.

Great comment to **Pat** on your choice to have a child.

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### © Pat Hario

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[JG] Babies, babies everywhere. It seems like that sometimes, especially at the Farmers' Market on Saturday morning. And the more high-tech those baby strollers get, the more likely it is that someone is going to get run over and seriously injured by a hit and run baby caravan. (just joking. ho ho.) Well, I will be curious about what you decide to do about your worry that someday you will suddenly want/need to have a baby. If, as you say, you "*address it as necessary, and not try to force any issues,*" I think you'll do just fine.

I guess Scott and I were being a little bit dishonest when we chose tax time paranoia as our theme for #130's cover. Like you, we also hand over our taxes to someone else to do for us. In fact, your tax person may be the same person we use, since we recommended ours to quite a few people a few years back. I love telling people that my tax advisor was a Marxist in college. Anyway, I just print out a report from my Quicken accounts which provides me with lists of all my free-lance income and deductions, and put that together with the necessary W2 forms and bank statements and hand it all over to Bev. Scott takes care of gathering all the house-related receipts and forms. Then she tells me how much money the government is going to give me. It's a rather enjoyable occasion actually, if I avoid looking at how much I spent in taxes the year before. Still, we thought the cover would be appropriate.

You asked me about my memory of concom meetings in the Olden Days. Well, I guess you didn't use that term exactly.... Like you, I am sure that the absolute numbers of people who regularly attend general WisCon meetings have decreased — I

would estimate by at least a third from WisCon's concom heydays. You suggest that maybe we've got more "behind the scenes" people who work on the convention, who no longer attend the regular meetings. Well, I agree with you that we had quite a few behind-the-scenes people involved this year and last, but I don't know whether that number has grown or decreased from previous years. That's hard to estimate because these folks' work is, after all, hidden from view. More to the point, all the behind-the-scenes folks in my department this year (programming) were brand new people from outside the group who have never been involved in WisCon before, and who didn't want to attend the general meetings at all. These people and people like them from outside the group may eventually save WisCon as a feminist SF convention, but it probably won't feel like the Madison group's convention anymore. That may or may not be a good thing.

It feels to me like what is happening with WisCon is much like what happened to *Aurora*. At the start of both the lives of the fanzine and the convention, the core group was deeply involved in both. If you wanted to be a member of the local group, you pretty much had to get involved on some level with either the fanzine or the convention. Our social gatherings inevitably overlapped with our meetings; the two were inextricably linked, since all of us had become friends through our involvement with these activities. Also, the people in the group who were most popular, who other people most wanted to spend time with, were deeply involved with the fanzine and/or the convention. Working on both or either became a way to "move up" in the group. If you gaffiated or simply never involved yourself in the fanzine or the convention, you began to find yourself on the fringes of too many conversations. Now this might not be a good thing for some people; I'm not saying that this describes any sort of "Golden Days" of Madison fandom, because for some people, this system created hierarchies and cliques that made them feel excluded and lonely. But the connection between the core group's involvement in these activities and the group's social life kept those activities very much alive.

When people began showing less interest in *Aurora*, the synergy between the social group and the fanzine moved to the convention. Without its center place in the group's attention, the fanzine was published less and less frequently, until we finally stopped, printed the final issue and refunded outstanding subscriptions. I remember one meeting where we talked about the sad state of affairs with

respect to *Aurora*, and how there was very little interest in doing the necessary work anymore. The meeting happened at a room in Union South and there were a lot of us there, but when we asked who was still interested in working on the zine besides **Diane Martin**, who was editor at that point, I remember only one person, Philip Kaveny, said anything. "I'd be willing to do a little proofreading," he said. I seem to remember laying my head into my arms and groaning a little. I felt that way last year after the phenomenally successful WisCon 20, when we held the first WisCon 21 meeting at Union South. Only a handful of people attended, and about a third of them were new faces. Many people were missing. It looked for a while as if no one would come forward to volunteer to be W21's chair. I asked for a show of hands of people who might be willing to take on a major role—a department chair or something on that level—at W21. One person raised their hand. It was sad. Happily, Jim Hudson and Diane Martin came forward and volunteered, and we were able to put on a very good convention. But people resources were tight, and the sense that the WisCon committee was separate from the Madison SF group's social center was strong.

It no longer feels necessary to be involved on any level with the convention or any other group project to join the Madison SF group. Of course, the social network that remains might be described as tattered, since there don't seem to be any more gatherings, except for the occasional party, which can attract the group as a whole. We lack a fulcrum these days.

I think that both the social group and the convention would be injected with new enthusiasm if the two overlapped a bit more than they do. If we stopped trying to counteract that old nostrum that Madison parties deteriorate into meetings. Or maybe not. Maybe we are all growing up and finding more fulfilling relationships and interests outside of the group, and this is simply a normal sort of evolution for a group like ours. Or maybe the new people that have joined in recent years and know little about the group *except* for the convention, will make it new again. Or possibly, the out-of-towners who did so much work on this year's concom, will fill many of the vacant spots and will gradually change the character of WisCon from a local convention to a more national (and eventually international) convention whose concom is the feminist community, not the Madison SF community.

If WisCon dies, and if the group doesn't replace it with some *other* project, the group will probably fall



apart, too. I don't think we can survive as a whole without some activity linking us together. Maybe the apa will be enough. I think the tendency for many of us to hang out with only a few people in the group and seldom see others, will continue and grow stronger. As for me, these past few years working on WisCon 20 and 21, and on the Tiptree Award, and helping these two institutions become such an amazing resources for feminist SF, has made me feel that it is real important that they survive somehow. I will continue to be involved in projects that support the feminist SF community, whether those activities involve the Madison group or not.

It will be interesting to watch how things turn out.

[SC] YCT Tracy on the Convention Center, I chuckled at your concern that you feel you can't criticize the center too much because you can't remember whether you voted for it or not. I think you should say whatever you like. After all, the damage you did in the voting booth either way is already done, and we all have the right to change our minds, right?

Your discussion on babies was very interesting and brought out responses that were almost as interesting as your own thoughts. It certainly highlighted some of the different points of view in the apa of babies and children. I sense a widening gap in the apa between writers who feel that the decision to have a baby puts them in the minority here in this group and they are made to feel like they don't quite belong. Then there are the writers who have decided not to have children who feel at odds with a wider society and culture that has, in recent years, gone positively gaga over kids. There is some friction between these groups of writers as both groups feel marginalized. Do you get that same sense?

YCT me, it always bugs me to drive to the West side where they are not only wasting some of the best farmland in the state on development, but the homes and buildings they construct are so boring. Madison quickly loses it's feeling of being a unique place whenever I travel out there. Of course the East side has recently been moving to catch up with a staggering level of new development out by the beltline.

I will have to stop in at Frugal Muse sometime. A number of people have recommended them to me. Thanks for the reminder.

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© Tom Havighurst

[JG] I loved your description of getting on your bike for the first ride of Spring. Ah yes. My first ride this year actually happened in late February. For all that it took a long time to get summer-like warm, it was warm early and steadily this year. I liked this

Spring more than I have many Springs of recent past. Except for the occasional blizzard, I've been riding steadily since early March. It's been nice. It's been even nicer because of all the walking I did during the winter. I didn't seem to need any warm-up period this Spring to get my muscled used to biking again. I hope to ride through November this year and keep the non-biking months down to two.

I notice that you think of both the apa and WisCon as things that bind our community. As you may have noticed, in my comment to Pat, I agree with you. You're one of the people who has really thrown yourself into work on the convention these past couple years, Tom, and I really respect you for all the time and energy you've put into it. But I think I've said all I can about the connection between community and WisCon here, so I'll just say I appreciate your comments and am glad that a conversation seems to be developing here in the apa about the situation.

[SC] Congratulations on the job news. It really shouldn't be underestimated how important it is for employees to feel like they are valued. I am currently working with a group of lead workers on my shift who are all great people who care about the quality of their work, but have been battered and frustrated by clueless superiors and entrenched bureaucracy for so long that they have become very cynical and paranoid.

Re: "Yeah, whatever" you are a man of few words, Tom, and they are all significant. I will have to keep that in mind when I am hanging out with you.

Nice piece on your first bike ride of the season. I have yet to go on my first ride. My bike is still sitting in the basement. One of these days, Jeanne and I will go on a ride and it will probably kill me.

YCT tattoo magazines, I agree with you completely. I've looked through a lot of them and I rarely see anything that I like, or could imagine on me. But our fellow apans have done a very good job of choosing cool designs.

YCT me, you are very welcome. Are you planning to do Potlatch next year? In the Bay area it will be fun.

Thanks for the comments on WisCon, see my Wither WisCon piece for more detail. I think we are seeing the situation from a similar point of view.

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© Bill Humphries

[JG] I continue to worry about you, Bill. Last month you wanted us all to think nice thoughts about the nuclear energy industry. This month, if I understand you correctly, you are arguing against taxing corporate income on the grounds that untaxed cor-

porate income could be reinvested in the economy, "leading to more income which can be distributed as either wages or dividends." The wages that have grown over the past decade seem to have mainly those paid out to CEO's, not to lower level workers. Am I hallucinating, or are you advocating the trickle-down theory, Bill?

Bill? Bill? Is that really you?! Have you been taken over by the Pod People, Bill?

[SC] Julie did a great job choosing her tattoo. See my above comment to Tom on tattoos.

On corporate taxes, I agree with Jeanne. I have never been sold on the idea that giving the rich (and corporations) more money, by way of lowering their taxes, will eventually trickle down into benefits for the rest of us. We have been down that road before and it has been all bad.

Your piece on shopping, and the trend toward censorship by large chain retailers, was much more agreeable. It is sometimes hard to believe these days that antitrust law even exists in the US as little as it is used in this time of massive mergers and acquisitions.

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### © Ruth Merrill

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[JG] Fonts are fun, but I suggest sticking with one or two per issue.

Nothing like "Household Hint #2" for turning a "Yeah, right" personality into an "Oh, La!" personality. Wheeeee!

[SC] Thanks for the poems. I liked "Witness", but was most struck by "The Cure". A very interesting poem.

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### © Kim and Kathi Nash

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[JG] Sometimes, well no, most times, your life reads like a "Roadrunner" cartoon. You know? meepbeep.

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### © Michael Rawdon

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[JG] Did you notice that *The Gold Coast* and *The Wild Shore* share a common character? The dying grandfather, so useless in the society of *The Gold Coast*, is the patriarch in *The Wild Shore*. He also shows up as a significant character in *The Pacific Edge*, the third book of Kim Stanley Robinson's trilogy, *The Three Californias*, in which we find out what may have caused the weird timeshifting that created three alternate universes for this character. In the third book, he plays a character made neither useless by the society, nor

as tragically *needed* as he is in *The Wild Shore*. He is a whole, centered, significant member of the community, who nevertheless leaves behind a healthy community when he dies. That's part of what makes that final book a limited sort of utopia. I may not have noticed this link between the three books if I hadn't read them back-to-back as I did, but it gave them a feeling of strength and unity that I really enjoyed.

Put as many baseball statistics in your zine as you like, Michael, but I can promise you that unless you write anecdotes around the statistics that are at least as interesting as those that **Andy Hooper** used to provide for his, I probably will skip those parts of your zine. (Grin back at you.)

[SC] Cool news about joining the Frisbee team. How seriously competitive is this? I ask because it sounds like a pretty mellow sort of competitive activity that makes more sense to me than the deadly serious softball and volleyball that so many of my acquaintances jump into in the summer (and let's not even talk about golf, which is getting even more popular since the arrival of Tiger Woods.)

*Downsize This!* is on my bookshelf next to Al Franken's book, both still unread. One response to your criticism of Moore's book is that I was a fan of his TV show *TV Nation* and I have met him and seen him speak. That could make a difference in how effective his humor works for a reader. I can see and hear him pretty clearly in my mind, and I am familiar with him as a funny guy who is also a very serious political activist.

I liked the Kim Stanley Robinson book more than you did, and the other three you mention are of interest to me, particularly the Swanwick because I liked the *Iron Dragon's Daughter* a lot. Thanks again for the comics review, I echo Lisa's encouragement to you to keep doing comics reviews for us.

YCT me, I find it rather odd that you take a "neutral" view of Wright's work. I rarely meet people who recognize his work who don't have an opinion about it. I don't think I can answer your question about putting a "giant hunk of concrete" on the lake shore, but re: Madison's need for a convention center, I think it is mostly about *downtown* Madison's need for a convention center.

Like so many growing cities, Madison is grappling with sprawl in the suburbs. Unlike you, I believe Madisonians recognize the threat and want to do something about it, but typically lack the will to take tough measures as well as agreement on a strategy to fix things. Sprawl, of course, hurts a vibrant downtown and John Hammond's decision to site his large Holiday Inn convention hotel out on the far west side was a direct and

immediate challenge to a healthy business climate downtown. Recognizing that keeping convention business downtown is an important part of keeping the downtown alive, the idea of a new convention center on the lakeside was proposed. The center is not the solution to all of Madison's problems, or even to all of the downtown's needs, but in the short time that I have been working as WisCon hotel liaison I have gotten a glimpse of the power and money in the convention business. I think the center is a good thing for the city, even if I don't agree with all the details of this particular plan.

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© Vicki Rosenzweig

[JG] I don't know, Vicki. I bet that if the government had given Frank Lloyd Wright grants to practice his art, we would have ended up with even more impractical structures because he wouldn't have any clients to bother him with demands. Do you know he wanted to build a mile-high skyscraper in Madison? It's hard to reconcile his theories of proper scale with that plan. It's hard to imagine Madison with a phallic symbol like that growing out of its isthmus.

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© Georgie Schnobrich

[JG] Lovely Holy Card, Georgie, at least that's what reminded me of from my Catholic youth. (Actually, at first I thought you were referring to Pat Murphy, not the Murphy of Murphy's laws.)

Apparently I missed seeing the copy of Margaret Atwood's *Good Bones and Simple Murders* that you promised to bring to the WisCon Turbo party. Did you? Is it a retelling of *Hamlet* from Gertrude's point of view? If so, I need to find it.

"Someday soon we will get a printer that can actually carry out the things this computer thinks it can do, and then I will gladly plunge into a spot of graphic artist techno talk with you!" Cool. It's a date.

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© Sandra Maney Taylor

[JG] I like your newest zine title, "Joyful Anarchy." I suppose you must think that Scott and I are a little too stuck in our ways to have used the same title for all our zines. But then I guess that's why we don't call *our* zine, "Joyful Anarchy."

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Last Quote of the Month

**We have decided to keep  
our contributions limited  
to 4 sides of paper . . .**

—Union Street #1, September 1989

How did that book discussion of *Sweetheart Season* turn out?

[SC] Thank you for the piece on your hike through Owen Park. I don't believe I have ever been out there.

YCT on comments, "*I am so behind it is pathetic.*" Don't

worry about it and don't be concerned about catching up. Just select a point where you put the old apas in a closet and start doing comments on the latest issue. It's OK, we like having you with us.

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© Julie Zachman

[JG] You were disconcerted to get actual responses to your zine. Did you like the feeling or not?

Yeah, I liked *Ice Station Zebra* a lot too, though part it might have been the fact that I was reading my parent's book off the shelf that was supposedly forbidden to me. For a while they tried to keep me from reading books in my so-called age group. Forbidding a book always makes it more attractive to kids, I guess. When I ordered the rest of MacLean's books from the library, I don't think that my folks even noticed that this was the same author of the book they had on their bookshelf. The thing I remember from the book (and was sorely disappointed when they didn't use it in the movie) was the last bit when the hero sent off a Disney cartoon in place of the film showing weapons designs.

[SC] "*I have to admit it was disconcerting to read actual response to stuff I actually wrote.*" Well, I hope you liked it and decide to stay.

YCT Pat, I should tell you that Pat (and I) hate puns, and making a pun out of her name in a comment to her took real guts. The fallout could be deadly.

YCT Jeanne on Alistair MacLean, you expressed surprise that she used to be a fan of his stuff. Oh hell, that's nothing. When I first met her, she was a closet *Dallas* fan.

[JG] Hey! It was only one season, the one that turned out to be a dream, and I snapped out of it right away!

Jeanne and Scott  
June 21, 1997