

The illusion of gray created
by an arrangement of
alternating black and white dots



This is Grayscale #12, a zine for *Intercourse*, and an Obsessive Press Publication #216, from Jeanne Gomoll, 2825 Union Street, Madison Wisconsin 53704-5136. 608-246-8857. ArtBrau@globaldialog.com

1 March 1999

I don't have sciatica.

After about six months of intensive physical therapy that has done no good, my doctor sent me to have more x-rays, and back to the orthopedist for another diagnosis. I was sitting in an examination room, my x-rays attached to a light box over my head when he walked in, gasped, and said, "My god!" Great bedside manner.

It turns out that in the short six months between two x-rays, I've lost almost all the cartilage in my left hip. Dr. Hiner told me that I have an extremely aggressive case of osteoarthritis there. I have an appointment to see a rheumatologist in May. (Two of their rheumatologists have recently quit, so I'm apparently lucky to get in that early.) Various treatments will be tried, but the likelihood is that I'm going to end up having my hip replaced within the next year.

Both of my dad's hips have been replaced, I suspect for the same reason. I haven't talked with him about this, but I need to do so soon. If it turns out that I've inherited this from him, the really funny part of this experience turns out to be that *I'll just have to accept that I have my father's hips*. Ho ho.

I feel better knowing what is going on. I was getting so frustrated with how much pain I was in, and not knowing if it was *ever* going to get better. Now, at least, I know what is wrong, and better than that: that there is something that can be done about it and that will definitely fix it. *sigh*

© Art Widner

You know how sometimes you make a mark in the column of someone else's apa zine and when you come back to it to write comments, you can't for the life of you remember what you wanted to say? That's what happened to me this month with your zine. Next to the paragraph that begins, "God is a Republican. Jesus is a Democrat," I wrote: "elbow-shower." If it weren't for the fact that I recognize my own handwriting, I'd swear that someone else must have written that note.

On the subject of your unique orthography, I *do* recall what I meant to say. Put me down as another member of the apa who would prefer standard (or thereabouts) English in your zine. It takes me more time to read a page of yours than a page of anyone else's in the apa, and I suspect that I pay less attention to the meaning of your words than simply the translation of them. If communication is the priority, then something closer to standard spelling is better for me. On the other hand, if style and ambiance is your priority, then you should stick with your preference. There's no question about the fact that your writing conveys a unique style and very "Artish" ambiance.

 © Lise Eisenberg

Congratulations on making such an enormous, wonderful change in your life! I'm really, really glad for you.

 © Kerry Ellis

You sound confused about what you want from a relationship with Scott. You say you're relieved to have it understood between you that you're "just friends," and yet the detailed way you write about him makes me feel as if it's a lot more important than a friendship to you, but that you don't actually want to *say* it. Whatever you come to understand you want, I send you the wish that the way is clear for it.

I was wrong about the winter being easy? Not at all. A month of sub-zero weather is still *only one month*, whereas we Wisconsinites usually expect 2-3 months of arctic weather. It was a *lovely* winter! A month of snow and ice is actually sort of fun. As long as you aren't my friend Barb Gilligan who broke her ankle on the ice during the worst week of that month, and has spent most of the time since then recuperating. Members of the Madison group signed up for days of the week for which we were responsible for visiting Barb, and doing chores that she couldn't do while she hopped along behind a walker. Scott and I had Monday. Barb is recovered now and Mondays are ours again.

You asked how others "handle receiving wants and wishes." Sometimes I don't handle it too well, at least from people I perceive as asking for a whole lot more than they would ever consider offering. I think one of the reasons I periodically get frustrated with WisCon is that the more work gets done by the active people in the group, the more criticisms are heard from the less active ones. I react rather poorly to sentences that begin, "You should," or "It would be better if you...." I think I'm capable of being fairly generous with my time and energy, but under the wrong circumstances, I get pretty grouchy, and find it easy to say "no." I don't think this is an altogether bad thing — to be able to say "no" — but I also think it is a bad thing that I get grouchy inside and seldom confront people who ask for stuff from me too often. I avoid dealing with them after a while and seldom find out if our relationship could have been "fixed."

It seems to me that you have a lot to be reasonably angry about towards Sonia. At minimum, it's a

good thing you're not roommates any more. Your styles obviously clash too much to allow you to accommodate one another. In fact, it doesn't seem to me that there could be many people whose personalities *would* accommodate Sonia's style.

I can't connect with your notion of being friends with someone you have sex with, but not feeling romantic towards them. Not that I think that would be bad thing; I just can't imagine myself making your choice. For me, sex is an expression of romantic feelings plus friendship. Without either romance or friendship, I wouldn't be too interested in pursuing the sex. If monogamy doesn't include sexual fidelity to you, what kind of fidelity does it imply?

 © Debbie Notkin

21 members in the apa is fine with me.

 © Jim Hudson

It was sure fun to see you and Diane performing with the Old Shakespeare Players, though I wish we could have stayed to see the last part of the performance, especially your and Diane's *Twelfth Night* excerpt. But, whew, 4 hours is a looong time on a school night! But how neat that Peter came all the way to Wisconsin to see the show.

 © Doug Barbour

You live an amazing life, Doug. Thanks for sharing your diary with us.

 © Elise Matthesen

We're going to have to make sure our zines aren't wearing the same color next time we're neighbors in the apa. A lovely zine, by the way. I love the way you write.

 © Elizabeth Fox

I don't get it. How do you add outdoor space to a front yard by fencing it in?

 © Jane Hawkins

Interesting how seeing the video clip of a rotator cuff tearing let you visualize what was happening in your own body and able to move your arm in ways that minimized pain and/or injury. I have the same sense of clarity now that I know what is really going on with my legs. I can distinguish now between the source of the pain and the secondary aches caused by limping.

“Charming,” for me, has more to do with the charmer; “likeable” has more to do with the person who likes. A charming person is generally perceived by most people to be charming. When I say someone is charming, I’m more often referring to a person’s effect, in general, on people. When I say someone is likeable, I’m probably referring primarily to my own reaction to them. Someone can be eminently charming, in my view, and — because of a personal experience — definitely unlikable to me. I can like someone quite a bit and at the same time see that most people would not be charmed.

I liked what you said about Mary’s efforts to “keep in touch” with those she loved. It made me remember the parts in Jane Austen’s novels which referred to the daily letter-writing duties of her characters. All that seems to have survived from that era is the sometimes-taught parental rule to send out thank-you notes for gifts. Keeping in touch is certainly something I’d like to work to improve in my own behavior.

 © Arthur Hlavaty

I agree with you (in your comment to Jim Hudson) that we seem to be building an enormous, problematic institution, as our prison systems expand. But I think I already went off the deep end in my comment to Jim last month. Did you hear that the U.S. is now Number One in the world for prisoner population? I believe we’ve also made the Amnesty International list for the first time for our inhumane treatment of prisoners. What a year of firsts!

I belong to a fairly healthy apa — the *Turbo-Charged Party Animal Apa*. Andy Hooper started it almost 13 years ago, basically as a Madison fan alumni apa, though there are lots of non-Madisonians in it these days. It’s not nearly as healthy as *Intercourse*, though. We lost our wait list a few months ago, and there are more minac zines published than I-apa. But still, it’s going strong. It’s a monthly; its OE is Jae

Adams, we’re up to issue 154, and the conversation is good, often excellent.

It was good to see you and Bernadette at the ICFA. What a neat conference! I was amused to hear some of the academics tell me how proud they were of their very casual and laid-back conference. It seemed pretty serious to me — and I liked a great deal of the seriousness. But it was amusing anyway, and made me realize how far the horizons of stuffiness were. I couldn’t get over the experience of seeing authors talked about at sessions they attended — by the paper authors and later, the audience — and all the while spoken of in the third person (rather than the second person). There sat Stan Robinson, listening intensely to a person sitting right next to him say “Robinson believes such and such,” or “Robinson does such and such with his writing....” Still, I had a great time, enjoyed all the sessions I attended, loved the weather, and even got to see the Everglades (and hundreds of alligators) on Sunday. (Silly me. It never occurred to me that there would be no programming scheduled on Sunday, or I probably would have arranged for us to return to Wisconsin that day. As it was, I’m glad we stayed through to Monday; I would have missed a very fun day exploring the Everglades with a good group of people.)

 © Lisa Hirsch

I commiserate with you about your roof. Scott and I will need to have ours ripped out and replaced soon too. The first and only previous owners of our house was a family of construction industry types. They did their own work, and probably skated around a few laws: like the one about only 3 layers of shingles. We’ve got four, too. And apparently there’s some concern about what exactly the first layer is made of. It was originally installed in the 19-teens. The inspector who looked over our house when we bought it, warned us that it’s going to be an extremely expensive proposition to replace it. Not only are there all the layers to be torn off, but our house is big, tall and complicated — two story plus a full attic. *sigh*

We’re gambling that we can put it off for a couple more years yet, since this year’s house project is to tear out the rug in my office, the tiles in the downstairs bathroom, replace the windows in my office and repaint the walls in both the office and bathroom. Work starts, in fact, the Monday before apa collation. Chaos will have descended on our house even as you read this paragraph.

Horrible stuff about Monsanto. We've got a community-supported farming coop here in the Madison area. Jim and Diane subscribe and get a weekly ration of vegies from them. It's a good thing; I'd like to consider joining them this year. I'd also like to find a similar coop for buying meat from local farmers.

Trusting teenagers with the responsibility of caring for small children has less to do with trusting the teenagers, I think, than a very calculated risk assessment undertaken by every parent who leaves their kids with a babysitter. How likely is it that something requiring adult capacity will happen in the few hours I leave my child with this slightly older child? Am I willing to take that risk?

The fact that my left leg hurts when I swung my right leg up onto a bike, makes considerable more sense with the new diagnosis, than it did with the old one of sciatica. At least it does to me, visualizing as Jane does, and with the knowledge of what exactly is going on inside me.

Tom Whitmore

I can sure sympathize with you about the connection between procrastination and depression. My sense of emotional well-being takes a nose-dive when I'm procrastinating. I remember once, only a not very long after I got my job at the DNR as a graphic artist; it was still very new to me, and I suspected that I wasn't a good enough artist for the job. Certainly my self-trained skills had a lot of holes in them. Anyway, I had a large, full color (4-color: cyan, magenta, yellow, black) map to produce, something I'd never done before. I knew the theory. I had the rubyolith for cutting separations. But I was stunned by the complexity of the job and horribly frightened that I would fail. I'd been putting off the job for a couple weeks and was getting behind at work on other jobs too. Scott and I went down to Chicago on a Sunday afternoon for an opera (Puccini's *Rondole*, I think), and I could

hardly concentrate at all, I was so worried about this job. What a waste of a lovely opera.... The more I procrastinated, the bigger the job loomed. Well, the next day, I finally sat down and made a list of all the components of the job and immediately began to feel better. Each part was obviously do-able although I'd have to spend some late nights in the office to get it done on time. And though it's not the best piece of work I ever did, the map was technically competent, and taught me a great deal about high end color work, and the penalties for my own procrastination. It's not worth the pain, I discovered, not that I've taken that lesson to heart every time I should have, but it's still a good lesson.

Actually, my experience with doctors is that they do not listen to what I am saying and that they pay even less attention to my body language. I say "I am in constant pain." I limp in and out of their office. And yet, when I am finally diagnosed as having a severe and aggressive form of osteoarthritis in my hip, they ask me why I wasn't more forceful in my request for help.

© D. Potter

Scott and I have taken a few cross country train trips. I think that's one of the best ways to travel, except for the fact that you can't smell the air in the world you're passing through. One of the interesting things about those national train line schedules is that they are set up so that the most interesting bits can be seen during the daylight hours. So I wonder if you will ever be able to see the bay's waterfowl and pilings in the daylight.

Dykes to Watch Out For is a great comic strip. We see it once a month in the very political comic zine, *Funny Times*, but it isn't enough. I got Scott all the books *A Room of Ones Own* had on their shelves one year for our anniversary. The bookseller thought this was a very strange gift but it turned out to be a perfect one.