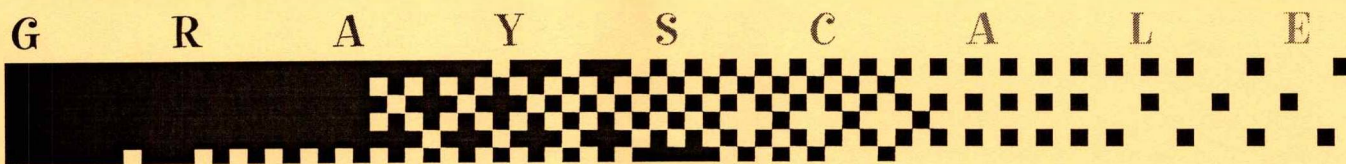


The illusion of gray created  
by an arrangement of  
alternating black and white dots



This is Grayscale #5, a zine for *Intercourse*, and an Obsessive Press Publication #194, from Jeanne Gomoll, 2825 Union Street, Madison Wisconsin 53704-5136. 608-246-8857. ArtBrau@aol.com

27 July 1997

---

## Hot Type

---

I wrote most of this zine in longhand—not something I have done in a very long time, probably not since the late 1980s, pre-Mac. But Scott and I had to get out of the house Saturday afternoon, out of the heat... It's been in the upper 90s for the past couple days with humidity close to 100%, which makes it almost hard to breathe. We needed someplace cool to go where both of us could work on some projects we needed to get done. So we drove down to campus to the UW Memorial Union on the shore of Lake Mendota—not to sit on the terrace overlooking the lake which is the usual place we head for, but to grab a table in the air-conditioned, cavernous Rathskeller by a window overlooking the terrace and the lake. I wrote mailing comments on a wood table etched with 100-year-old graffiti (“Class of 1898”), and marveled at how reliance on computers has caused my handwriting to degrade and how frustrating it is not to be able to make easy edits by pen. But we had a pleasant afternoon, sometimes talking, sometimes working. Scott read and sipped his beer; I wrote in my notebook and occasionally gazed out the windows at the terrace and the lake beyond it. We watched a violent storm move over the lake while the trees on the terrace thrashed around madly, and clusters of people ignored the tornado watch sirens and stood peering into the turbulent clouds north of the lake. Most of the storms we've had these past few days have been convection storms, caused by hot, wet air rising into cooler, higher levels of the atmosphere—not the welcome harbingers of a cool front we desire—and the heat simmers even as the cool rain falls. The spooky speed of thundercloud building that happens in this kind of weather has resulted in a rash of tornadoes, some of which were sited north of Madison on Friday night, though none touched down. In any case we weren't anticipating that the storm had cooled things off and were thus amazed when we walked out of the Union several hours later, steeling ourselves for a blast of thick heat, and instead felt a cool breeze and mild air as we waked through the doors. The streets were filled with more people than had been about when we arrived on campus, and their expressions were considerably less grim and sweaty than they had been earlier in the afternoon.

---

## ABCs at DGEF

---

In July I went down to Peoria, Illinois for some training on web page design. Dynamic Graphics Educational Foundation (DGEF) offers some really great courses for graphic artists, some of the best available anywhere in the country, in my opinion. The courses usually last 3-4 days, are taught by professional artists (not professional teachers), and are incredibly intense, hands-on, and immediately useful. Other students tend to be people working in the field who need to learn the skills for stuff they're working on now. I've taken 6 or 7 DGEF classes in my DNR career and found them really useful. So, I managed to convince management to send two other artists and myself to the DGEF web design course and we're all raring to go now. My plan is to design a page for myself at home here first, using tables to get a very “designed” look with small-

sized graphics. I figure it will have many uses... A place to post stuff friends and customers want to see, including a resume and portfolio. It will also be a great calling card at the DNR to demonstrate my capabilities to various bureaus. Right now, I think most people are thinking of us artists as folks who will give them graphics that they can put on the web pages they design themselves. I hope that by demonstrating the advantages of having a graphic artist designing the whole look of their page, that we will be able to dissolve a few barriers.

Georgine Price and Linda Pohlod—the two other DNR artists—went down in June and I went in mid-July, so as to divide the rather large training expenditures into two fiscal years. Previously I'd taken a bus or train to Peoria. I liked being able to read a book during my trip, and this year planned to do the same thing. However budget cutbacks in public transport have whacked up bus and train schedules so that there are no longer any quick ways to travel from Madison to Peoria. Counting layovers in Chicago and Bloomington, either train or bus takes 13 hours or more. So I grumbled a lot, and rented a car. The drive took me 3 1/2 hours. (*Why should we pay for mass transit? People don't want to use it. They prefer to drive their own car. ...Yes, and I wonder why that is. Grumble.*)

But I had a fine time. I actually like going to this sort of thing on my own, without anyone I know. If I go with a co-worker, I end up spending most of my free time with that person, and tend not to talk to new people as much as I would like. And at a training session like the ones DGEF offers, meeting new people, comparing work experiences, sharing production methods and ideas, networking with other professionals in my field, is one of the best things about the experience. Indeed the conversations were great. It turned out that almost all of us were feeling a great deal of pressure to learn web design *fast*. Several years ago, I would have told any prospective graphic artist that they absolutely needed to know how to use electronic tools. Now I would add that we also must know how to design for the web. Things have been changing so incredibly fast over the last decade! I think that's why I've been enjoying myself so much in my work, actually. Anyway, we all had a lot to discuss about our various employers' attitudes toward the web and the role artists should play in the process. For most of us, our company or agency's intranet or web pages were initially designed by techies. In some cases, management wanted their artists to become more active in web design; in other cases, artists were

actively campaigning to become involved. All of us felt there was little time to waste.

Well, after a couple days of intense training, and late-into-the-night discussion with other students, all of us felt like longtime friends. This is where I always make my blunders. It's really hard for me to experience such intense understanding with another person on some important issues, and not make assumptions that we must share opinions on other issues of equal importance. That's a pretty naive assumption, of course.

Once in a moment of high hilarity, we were reciting favorite jokes to one another, and it was my turn and I told a joke that... well, let's say this joke assumed a certain cynical attitude towards religion. \*sigh\* Just writing that makes me feel really dumb; my blunder was so obvious. The joke was received in stunned silence, and in a little while the joke recitations stopped. At dinner that night I discovered that the woman from Sitka, Alaska was married to a minister. Another woman, a very sweet woman from Louisiana named Adelle, mentioned in the course of dinner that she thought many modern-day problems might be eliminated if people would only remember that their primary relationship was with Jesus Christ.

I wasn't the only one that made assumptions, though. Adelle's advice to cultivate a relationship with Jesus was part of a larger conversation about the supposed failure of the modern education system. Her comment fell just as thuddingly as my religious joke had earlier in the day. Others at the dinner table swerved off in a different direction and went after the contemporary whipping stock, e.g., Baby Boomers who grew up in the 60s, abandoned morality, and doomed the next generation to lives that lacked moral compass.

"Hey!" I said, grinning and laughing a little. "I'm a child of the 60s!" People laughed with me—glad, I think, that I hadn't taken their ravings personally. But then I got a little serious and said, "You know, I'm a little tired of hearing the 60s blamed for everything people think is wrong about today's world. I'm actually pretty proud of being part of a generation that acted so much out of ideals. Mistakes may have been made, but I think a lot of pretty good things came out of the 60s — the civil rights movement, environmentalism, feminism..."

Ah well. It was like another lead balloon had fallen. And then it was back to territory about which we knew we shared a passion. Web technology, electronic graphic design, the politics and pleasures of being a working artist.

You'd think I would have learned. On the last day, after class had ended, most of us sat around the hotel bar talking some more. (Really, we couldn't get enough of one another. We were using one another to help process all the stuff that we'd been absorbing over the past three days.) Doris, the woman sitting next to me lit up her cigarette. She looked at me and said, "You don't smoke, do you?" In fact it seemed that most of the people taking the course smoked, and I had been thinking about how much I appreciate the fact that so few of the people I know in Madison do.

"No," I said. "I'm glad I never started too, because I'm sure I'd have a hard time stopping."

Doris nodded sympathetically and told me about the many times she'd tried and failed to quit smoking. She sounded very sad and really frustrated, so I asked her if she ever felt angry at the tobacco industry. (Please note that I was assuming here that of course everyone must think of the tobacco industry as Evil Incarnate. Bad assumption.)

Doris misunderstood me and in fact was vociferous in her anger at the lawsuits aimed at Big Tobacco. She thought I was asking her if I thought the tobacco industry deserved to be attacked. It was her choice and nobody else's responsibility that she smoked and she thought it was incredibly unfair that the tobacco industry was being sued. Doris was so upset and so suddenly loud, that her words drew the attention of a bunch of other DGEF students, plus another group at the bar, and they all joined in outraged agreement that Tobacco companies were being unfairly maligned and that the lawsuits were intrinsically unfair.

Sitting on my other side was Scott, who had traveled down to Peoria on that last day of the training course. We planned to do some traveling together for a couple days afterward. Having ignited this unexpected explosion of sympathy for the tobacco industry, I shrunk back into my chair and looked over at Scott for sympathy, who was gazing at me with a huge, amazed grin on his face. He looked to his left at Adelle, who I had learned to like a great deal in spite of our slight differences of opinion on the subject of religion. Scott asked Adelle, "Has Jeanne been doing this sort of thing all week?"

"Oh, ALL of the TIME!" said Adelle in a sweet, Louisiana drawl. And they both shook their heads at me in amusement.

Still, I *like* going to these classes and I suppose I will always make similar blunders.

---

## Elise Matthesen

---

As I read, I almost get the impression that there are two different people writing your zine, Elise. One: the experiencer and two: the commentator, who occasionally turns to her own experience, at which point I half expect another commentator to materialize. If I go back to rewrite my own writing—an essay or letter—I am far more likely to want to change the text and incorporate new information into the original text. I think I would find it hard to write in your zine's style of commenting and correction. Instead, I more often tend to edit myself so that on some occasions, I have embroidered or rearranged a story so often that I've actually forgotten the real sequence of events or what I was really feeling at the moment.

But maybe I am making more of this zine of yours than it's meant to communicate.

Wonderful metaphor describing two people on the shore of the same lake as you, seeing the same shoreline—as a transition from one world to another. And how good it feels to know that someone else is using concepts in the same way you feel them.

I used to envision a different sort of image for the opposite of this sort of mutual understanding that your lake shore metaphor dramatizes. During a really difficult breakup a long, long time ago, I imagined my lover and I digging holes on two sides of a very tall fence, each of us shouting over the fence to one another about how big were the holes that we were each digging.

"Enormous!" I shouted. "I'm digging the biggest hole I can for you." (Let's ignore for the moment that someone who uses the phrase "digging a hole" as a synonym for "falling in love," may not have a healthy concept.)

"My hole is really deep, too. I'm spending all my time making it as deep as possible," said my lover.

Well, the conversation continued for quite some time with each of us bragging to the other that our excavations were deep and significant—without, however mentioning any actual measurements. I saw myself standing at the bottom of a hole deeper than my height. It would be difficult, if not impossible to climb out of it. It's a wonder I was able to throw dirt from out of the bottom of my pit, but you know how it is with these dream metaphors; unlikely things are possible.

But suddenly my lover no longer shouted updates on the depth of his love. The silence was

ominous. He started complaining that my own descriptions were putting him under too much pressure, and then he finally stopped speaking at all.

After a difficult, painful scramble, I managed to extricate myself from the hole I had dug for myself, and walked around the fence to check out what had happened to my lover. It turned out he'd been using a little teaspoon to scratch out a sort of ditch in the hard-packed soil. He'd simply walked away from his excavation, and probably couldn't even have tripped as he walked away. His hole hadn't swallowed him as mine had me.

After that I determined to make sure I checked vocabularies when I became involved. Sharing the same images, or at least understanding each others' images is a crucial part to a relationship for me. I think that the term used in this apa for those important images is, however, "stories."

Anyway. I admire your lake shore metaphor as a fellow visual metaphorist.... and hope that you will have many people in your life with whom you share the crucial vocabulary of interpersonal languages.

---

### Arthur Hlavaty

---

Your fascination with banking books reminds me of my partner, Scott's opinion of insurance books. He thinks the jargon-laden content of most basic insurance texts, plus our culture's tendency to equate insurance agents with used car dealers—all tends to camouflage the rather amazing manipulation of power and wealth that goes on in this industry. And it's easy to forget how instrumental banking policy is in the political history of a nation. The recent scandals uncovered in Switzerland of the role of that country's bankers in World War II, as Hitler's financiers, should remind not to glaze over when it comes to bank policy, as it's probably not as boring and irrelevant as the popular image suggests.

I agree with you that the sheer hassle of divorce procedures in this society emphasizes the risks people are willing to take when they marry and the depth of their commitment. At least for the people who actually think this through.... However, I think that some folks figure that it is the *other* person in the couple for whom the potential hassle will discourage desertion. The marriage vows, for them, are a way of making sure that the other person is using the same vocabulary of commitment as they use.

In other words, "trust me," makes some people a lot more nervous than "I do."

---

### Kimberly Cline

---

Sorry to hear about the pressure you're experiencing at work. I see this decision made frequently—in both public and private sectors—to increase efficiency and decrease staff. Obviously, sometimes cutting staff makes sense in some workplaces. But it seems that workers are frequently being laid off (or simply not replaced as in the case of your workplace) by management who sees the opportunity for greater profits without an understanding of how to make the production/service process more efficient. And when the economy move fails to increase profits, and workers bail because of the stressful working conditions, management blames workers rather than their own bone-headed business decisions.

Sorry too, to hear about your landlord problems. I really admire how you've stepped in and acted as advocate for your fellow tenants. But I'm sort of confused as to why tenants should be expected to pay for capitol improvements. I would think the landlord should expect to recoup costs by the fact that the rental units will be rentable at high or higher rents for a longer time. I guess that's why I'm not a business person. My ideal landlord is a very nice man from whom I rented a year or so after I graduated from college, who paid my roommate and I for our assistance (by reduced rent) in making repairs, and who promised not to raise our rent as a result of those improvements while we lived there. I used to see him on weekends when he'd drop by to polish the brass mail boxes in the lobby. What a sweet guy. And he's now a major real estate developer in town, which means to me that there's at least one "good guy" in this field.

I admire your positive attitude toward people in spite of the hassles you've been having recently. Expecting the best of people is better for your own mental health, as well as probably encouraging a few folks to act according to their own better natures, *because* you expect it of them.

---

### Debbie Notkin

---

You named the version of "asking permission before forgiveness" as a process that makes sense sometimes in a hierarchical model. I called that model a "dysfunctional" one. And that started me thinking about whether the two things, dysfunction and hierarchy sometimes go hand-in-hand, and whether there is any sort of causal relationship.

The Tiptree fund did indeed make a lot of money at WisCon 21: Last issue of *Grayscale*, I said that we'd raised \$5,000+. Well, now it appears that we actually earned over \$6,000, which makes W21 Tiptree's most successful fundraising event so far.

You're absolutely right in describing the Tiptree fundraising success as one that epitomizes free market choices. (And equally perceptive in pointing out that some well-known capitalists don't seem to like this particular expression of the free market. Ho ho.)

The thing I most admire about the Tiptree Award phenomenon is that its ceremony functions perfectly in service of the goals of the Tiptree Award. I've often been personally turned off to ceremonies in my life because the enactment of those events seems to bear so very little connection and sometimes lacks any relevance whatsoever to the events or the process or the accomplishments or the changes they are supposed to celebrate. Huge mobs of students being graduated *en masse* at ceremonies which supposedly celebrate intensely personal achievement rings discordantly to me. Marriage ceremonies which play more to the audience of relatives and acquaintances than to the couple making vows to one another, repel me when I consider them as a potential forum for my own promises to Scott. Municipal and national holidays hide more about the true state of affairs and blur people's appreciation of their heritage, more than they inspire national understanding. ...and on and on....

Maybe the Tiptree Award ceremonies feel different to me because we're at such an early stage of the award's life, but it feels to me as if the Tiptree ceremony is among the only ceremonies with which I've ever been involved that *in itself* furthers the goals of the institution, rather than attempting—imperfectly—to mirror it. I find it thrilling that the ceremonies honor people and ideas that are so rarely recognized, much less rewarded by our society. And judging by the extreme enthusiasm shown by audiences every year at the Tiptree ceremonies, I'm not alone.

What an excellent show-and-tell (multimedia?) description/definition of "clean communication." We needed that. There was suddenly all this discussion of a term that we all thought we understood in the same way, though few were using it in the same way. Now, some may disagree with your definition of the term, but cannot misunderstand as easily if someone says they mean it in the way you described it. It might be interesting to compare and contrast your scenario/definition with a scenario devised by someone who thinks "clean communication" is a manipulative term.

At that point we know we have two terms masquerading under the same name. Thanks Debbie.

Ok, ok, no more apologies for zine performance, I promise.

Using laughter as an outlet during stressful times has always been a big gun in my personal arsenal. I used it a lot last month when I had another little medical misadventure. I fell down a few of the steps to our house's second floor, (must learn to close books while wandering around the house!) and bounced a couple times on my tailbone, which was bruised and painful for about 3+ weeks. I carried a little pillow everywhere with me during my recuperation and joked with folks that poetic balance had been achieved. In December I couldn't stand up. In July I was unable to sit down.

---

## Tom Whitmore

---

**I**nteresting questions about honesty, how and when we talk about personal issues in our lives, and how that affects what we feel and what we want....

My answer to the first part of your set of questions will probably strike you as much too simplistic. Actually, it does to me too. But I feel satisfied with the way I deal with the issue of confiding in others and so probably have forgotten the anxious thought processes that preceded my choice of behaviors.

Nevertheless, here is my way of dealing with these issues: I simply don't tell stuff about myself to anyone from whom I would not happily accept criticism or similar information in return. Giving people information about oneself opens the door and welcomes them into intimate territory. They can do what they want with the information they receive and one has to be willing to take the risk that there may be positive and negative reactions to personal information about oneself, and also to expect analogous door-opening into the personal lives of the people in whom one confides.

...So, my answer is that I'm . . . well, *picky* about who I confide in. Responses to very important self-revelations are often make-or-break experiences for me in terms of the viability of any particular friendship. And that's OK, I think.

As to the second part of your set of questions—whether failing to confide oneself desires in others might actually prevent oneself from acknowledging those desires. Yes, I think that is a very real possibility. I think that if I hadn't acknowledged to anyone, as I did in my 20s, that I felt isolated and lonely, I may not have done anything to change at that time, and maybe not

for a long time afterwards. Describing my feelings to a friend suddenly made those feelings much more real to me than they had been when they existed only in my head.

---

## Elizabeth Fox

---

**Y**ou say that you don't think it's hypocritical to become interested in religion for the sake of community, fun, celebration, or intellectual discussion. I have a hard time with this point of view, maybe because my upbringing as a Catholic was so bound up with absolutes. There was only one reason to be a Catholic, and the attraction of friendly, fish fries was not it.

Besides that, there are so many other places where one can find all or some of the attractors you list as reasons for joining a church. One could take courses at a local college or join a reading circle or political activist group. There are lots of groups and institutions, and none of them have as their first and foremost mission to promote the role of God in the lives of its members. In my mind, joining a church—well, most churches—means joining a group of people bound primarily by a shared belief in God. I see centrality of God (not spirituality) in religion as being far more crucially important than SF, for instance, is to membership in the fannish community.

But, for the sake of argument, let's say that SF/fandom *is* comparable to God/religion. I still find atheist and agnostic parents' participation in religion more hypocritical than non-SF readers participation in SF conventions. Religion, or the belief in God, is still the operational norm in our culture. Those who publicly proclaim themselves to be nonbelievers place themselves outside of many communities. In some cases, they encounter active bias. Few politicians, for example, could survive without giving lip-service to some mainstream religion. The scene in the movie *Contact* where the main character answers the committee's question about her belief in God honestly, and refuses to violate her integrity by pretending to believe, is a common situation in public life. (Not to say many of us risk our chance to contact aliens by whether or not we pretend to religious faith.) Parents, I imagine, come smack up against this dilemma all the time with grandparents, aunts and uncles and teachers who make judgments about parenting skills based on church attendance. Someone attending an SF convention won't feel pressure to read SF anywhere *except* within the community of SF fans and readers, whereas someone who joins a church

may be responding to pressure from outside the church, from society in general.

You wrote to Debbie that you failed to see why keeping a neat yard was rude to one's neighbors. I would never want to live in a neighborhood where the presence of dandelions or a less than perfectly landscaped yards would provoke legal action by the neighbors, but I do see some level of yard care is "polite." For one thing, an unkempt yard will have a detrimental effect on the house values in the neighborhood, and effectively stealing from the value of someone's investment *is* rude.

You also mention to Debbie that you think it is equally wrong for a 16 year old or a 37 year old single mom to raise a kid because of what you assume to be too much stress on one parent. I have witnessed too many variations to be persuaded that there is any blanket rule that applies to the viability of single-parent families. I know it's possible to dig up statistics that show that many kids thrive in single parent families and think that every situation, every family creates its own environment.

---

## Lisa Hirsch

---

**I**nteresting story about dealing with Donna's mother, Mary Ellen. It's always fascinating to see the relationship between a parent of one partner and the other partner. Not having grown up with that parent, the other partner can circumscribe a lot of the emotional loading that gets heaped upon simple conversation loops and behavior, and see the underlying structure of parent/child relationship. I have found it really helpful to have Scott with me when we visit my parents and I think Scott finds it equally helpful for me to be with him when he visits home. A quick reminder of the outside world and the opportunity to discuss various conflicts with someone who witnessed a confrontation is a refreshing and healing thing.

---

## Art Widner

---

**G**ood essay about aging, Art. I sure wish I didn't recognize glimmerings of so many of the experiences you describe. As one of "the older members of this apa," sure, I remember Dawn Plaskon.

You recommended to Jane that she consider trying to discover what Sam is trying to tell her he wants when he hits her. I dunno, Art, it seems to me that if Jane made the effort to figure out what desire Sam's hitting expressed, especially if she satisfied that desire, that this would constitute a *reward* for the

hitting behavior. I like Jane's solution, that is to encourage Sam to figure out another way to communicate with her.

How do I pronounce "RAEBNC"? Differently than either of the two options you suggested. I hear it with three syllables: Ray-Be-Nack.

Thanks for franking Shirley's essay and comments with your zine. What a frustrating but very amusing story. Sometimes it seems that the only possible, good side-effect to be taken away from frustrating interactions with bureaucracy is that they often provide great material for fanzine articles.

Shoot! I'm old enough to remember those invisible hairnets too! I didn't realize that they were made out of human hair, though...

The newspaper clipping, "Deer Attacks Man at Sea Ranch," bears some similarity to a real event in Wisconsin. (I know it's real because I heard the actual recording of the 911 phone call this guy made.) Let's call this guy George. George accidentally hit a deer with his car on the highway and decided, "why let good venison go to waste?" and so he loaded the dead deer (so he thought) into the back seat of his car. George claimed later (on that 911 call) that he was on his way to the ranger station to have his deer tagged and made legal (since it wasn't even deer-hunting season), but before he could get to the closest park, the deer in the back seat woke up and attempted rather violently to GET OUT OF THE CAR. The deer kicked and bit George and George just managed to pull his car over to the side of the road without having another accident. Luckily he pulled over right next to a telephone booth. The deer escaped as George opened the door, ramming George and giving him another bruise as it exited the car. George limped over to the telephone booth, dripping blood on the roadway as he moved. Suddenly, a big dog charged George. No doubt the dog smelled blood or the deer or both and George just managed to stumble to the safety of the telephone booth and squeeze behind the folding glass doors before the dog reached him. George was effectively trapped in the booth, however, like some bad Stephen King movie, because the dog remained snarling and barking outside the booth. That's when George called 911.

---

### Donya Hazard White

---

I liked your long comment to Elise about the subtleties of the question of when and how much to tell others when you have fallen in love with someone else. My own inclinations toward secrecy in the early

stages of a love affair probably stem from my monogamist leanings. But I do enjoy the sweetness of the beginnings of a relationship that is shared by no one else but the two of us....

---

### Douglas Barbour

---

I sure wish you could come to a WisCon someday. We *do* accept proposals for papers, you know, and schedule an entire track of academic presentations. We offer CEU (Continuing Education Units), and would be quite willing to send a stuffy letter on pompously designed stationary to the University staff person of your choice, officially inviting you to our "conference." (Did you go to worldcons when Susan Wood's department paid for her trips and she'd "deliver her paper" nude, on the edge of a swimming pool late in the night and we'd all pull her into the water before she'd quite finished the first sentence?)

Thanks for the interesting info about Canadian politics you included in your comment to Steve. I hadn't realized what "reforms" the Reform party backed.

---

### Lise Eisenberg

---

Thanks for the Hong Kong report. Having read Vicki Rosenzweig's report in *Turbo* apa, it was fun hearing a second perspective. It sounds as if you two made good traveling companions. I've occasionally felt immediately at home in an unfamiliar place, (Portland, OR, for example) though it's strange to think that this feeling might happen in so foreign a place as Hong Kong.

---

### D. Potter

---

You wrote, "Because you are the Madisonian who has worked the most years on WisCon, I tend to think of it as yours rather than the committee's. So next year should change my perception, yes?" This sounds like a suspiciously sarcastic comment, along the lines of the remarks I heard from people at W21 who remembered that I was planning to back way off after W20... I guess I won't every completely back off, not while I live in Madison and WisCon happens here, but I *do* need a break this year.



The cartoon printed on the last page is one that Scott and I find both familiar and hilarious.

—Jeanne Gomoll

