

# Union Street

A joint zine by Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis

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## Business, but not Official:

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[SC] I would like to remind folks that Jeanne and I will be hosting our annual New Year's Eve party again this year. Everyone in *Turbo* is welcome. We will print an invite next month.

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## Karen Babich: Cover

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[JG] Very nice. I like the font, and how you overlapped grayscale and black type. But the tactile cartoon character was a stroke of genius. It just goes to show that we *can* have 3-D covers without chunks falling or peeling off. Very nice! What did you stuff the critters with? Kleenex?

[SC] Yes, very nice cover. We were lucky to get a Marvin the Martian.

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## Michael Rawdon

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[JG] Our disagreement on fiction is actually getting rather amusing for its predictability.... I don't have a lot to say about *Snow Crash*; I thought it was an enjoyable book, very exciting. But I definitely thought the worst element of the book was the character, Y.T., who you call "the main redeeming feature." I thought Stephenson had done a bad job of portraying a teenage girl.

I appreciated your comments about what motivates you in terms of what kinds of books you like to read. It looks as if both of us have been thinking about this topic. For me, political and social ideas have a lot more to do with my enjoyment of fiction.

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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Union Street #80  
Obsessive Press (JG) #183  
Peerless Press (SC) #82

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November 1996 for *Turbo-Charged Party Animal* #125.

In a comment to **Tracy Benton**, you wrote: "I once read that females are by definition the fraction of the species which can bear children. By that definition, all Gethenians would be female." M. J. Engle wrote a very thought-provoking novel using that flawed definition as a basis for a society. In *The Rainbow Man*, she described a world which uses that very definition for gender. The main character is a space-wandering woman who decides to settle down on this world. By most people's definition, she would be considered a heterosexual woman. But by the definitions of her newly adopted world she is a man because she has had herself surgically altered so as not to be able to get pregnant. In fact, when she persists in her preference for men as sexual partners, she is labeled a homosexual and risks imprisonment and possible execution for flaunting the law against homosexuality.

[SC] Your thoughts on why you are writing these reviews was very interesting. One of the many things that I love about my relationship with Jeanne is how we both enjoy reading something like a book or article or the apa, or going to a movie or show, and talking about it later. We both tend to "review" stuff out loud to each other. Probably that is where that energy goes for us rather than the

urge to write it all out. Your approach is a lot bolder. You are inviting a much greater diversity of reactions to your opinions. Writing it out is also a lot more work. It is a cool thing that you are doing this for us.

I liked *Snow Crash* more than you did. I would not disagree that the book could have been shorter, perhaps, but I was enjoying the ride even before the plot kicked in full speed later in the book. I thought Stephenson was very funny with at least one joke on every page and I was quite content to follow him around wherever he led. I never found myself bored or felt that he was developing plot lines that never went anywhere, which is my usual complaint when a book feels too long to me.

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**Vicki Rosenzweig**


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[JG] I too, do much better saving money if it is done automatically than if I have to consciously put it away every month. In fact, I would not have saved my part of our house down payment if it were not for the automatic savings plan. Not that I started out saving for a house, though... Several years before I met Scott, a friend and I began to plan for a trip to Italy where we hoped to visit all the major opera houses and bicycle around the countryside. We drew up an itinerary and a budget and promised to go in two years. I divided up the amount I would need to make the trip by the number of paychecks in the next two years, and arranged with my bank to have that amount automatically deducted from my paychecks. I was amazed at how quickly I got used to a reduced spendable income, just as I am amazed today at how I mostly forget that my paycheck is actually much larger than the one I see, because mortgage payments and regular bills are automatically deducted.... But anyway, after about a year and a half, my friend Anne moved to Pittsburgh, having gotten a really great job offer and we realized that she wouldn't be able to get enough vacation time to take the trip so soon after she began working. So, we postponed the trip, and in the end, never took it. However, I kept the saving plan and when Scott and I decided that we'd like to buy a house, I already had saved enough for my part of the down payment.

Excellent response to demands for teaching of creationism. "*Which* creation myth?" If one is taught, they should all be taught. Thanks. I'll have to remember that one.

Sorry if I misunderstood you about what you volunteered to do at next year's WisCon. This is what you said (and what I quoted in a note I sent off to Jim Hudson and Diane Martin): "I'd be willing to work on the next WisCon. I don't think someone a thousand miles away should be running a department, but I know there's work that can be done remotely, and more that needs doing at the con.

Quote of the month

**Baron Frankenstein  
looked up from his  
sewing, smiled  
benignly across the  
laboratory at his  
similarly engaged  
creation and protégé,  
and called, "Yes, yes!  
Put on a happy face;  
tonight will be your  
first date with the rest  
of your wife!"**

— Anthony Buckland,  
winner of a Dishonorable  
Mention for an SF  
submission to the US Bulwer  
Lytton fiction contest.

(Depending on scheduling, I might do something like the consuite assistant job that I suggested to **Hope** as a necessary role.)"

Apparently, the experiment of mystery-gender kids has already been done. I don't remember seeing it, but I am told that one of the first issues of *Ms. Magazine* had a story of this being done with a whole class of little kids.

Thanks for the offer of tapes of the early Holly Near albums. I would take you up on the offer if I had a tape deck and could listen to them, but we don't have one and have no plans to get one eventually.... I wish they'd bring them out again on CD, that's what I'm hoping for.

[SC] YCT **Kim Nash** on fluff in *Turbo*, good response (I also liked **Jae's** approach, keep writing but label the serious stuff

for the low-fluff impaired.) Kim is just showing off his tendency to shoot from the hip from time to time. Keeps things lively in the apa, don't you think?

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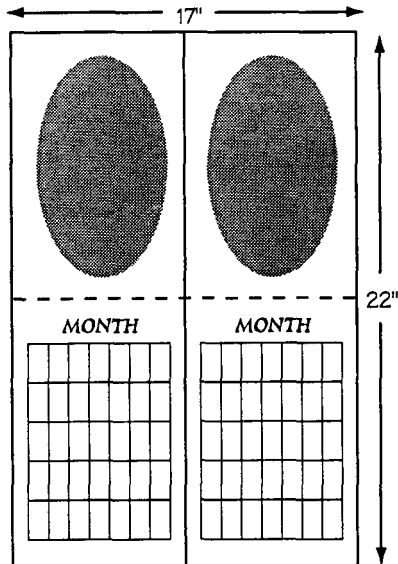
**Georgie Schnobrich**


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[JG] Ah! The orange paper is back again!

What a potentially interesting story *that* would be! *Mansfield Park* from Mary Crawford's point of view.... Unlike many of the characters that Austen goes after, she is not a stupid character. She may, in fact, be more observant of other people than the protagonist, Fanny herself. Granted, Mary's far more selfish, but her sense of humor and self-image are also more attractive than Fanny's. I can certainly imagine several episodes in that novel that might be interpreted entirely differently from Mary's point of view than what we get from Fanny's timid, judgmental one. I would start out with her bizarre adopted family.

If you are going to do 12 drawings, I think you should *definitely* do a calendar. The printing costs needn't be too expensive. You could, after all, print them back-to-back on tabloid-size sheets (22"x17") like so...



You would get four months printed per sheet, which would mean you'd only have to have 4 sheets printed, cut and folded per calendar, including a cover (which would only have to be printed on one side). A print run of 200 on uncoated stock wouldn't cost too much.... I bet they'd sell fantastically well at SF conventions. You could even include important SF events on calendar dates, and make it useful for the whole SF community! Would you like some help putting this together? Let's talk.

Wow! I would have loved to have seen those three-dimensional cakes. Your cake decorating skills are just incredible.

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### Michael Shannon:

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[SC] I enjoyed the flying lesson piece. Congratulations and good luck on the new job.

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### Jae Adams

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[JG] Your whole zine is a "low fluff area," Jae. Better give up on any ambitions to **Kim's** ideal. You are Without Hope.

You're right, I've run out of Austen much too soon. If a time traveler went back to Austen's time, I wonder if they could they cure Addison's disease with a bottle of aspirin or an injection of a wonder drug, or something equally simple? If that plan proves impractical, perhaps you could recommend which of Wharton's books for me to start on, please?

Great comment to Scott on the subject of Grace. We both, I think, agree with you emphatically.

Jae On Line. What a thought. (Shall we soon see Jaewalk@aol.com?) But how sad that you prom-

ise never to give out your email address to any Madisonians. It will Get Out, you know.... I was glad to see that you accepted **WHump's** justification for his Internet fascination, even though **Jim Brooks** judges such self-defined rationales as dangerous.

You are very welcome. I didn't know that the Woolf piece was your calligraphy, though I certainly thought of you when the memorial invitation arrived in the mail. Who bought the piece from you at the Hilldale? Was Karen Axness one of your buyers? To be sure, it would certainly have been the right thing to do to have contacted you before they made use of your work for the memorial invitation. I am glad, however, that you are not upset about it.

Now that I know who did the calligraphy, I would like to ask you for permission to use it *again*. Karen Joy Fowler asked me to design a bookplate for use in the copies of Tiptree winning and shortlisted books that are donated to the Tiptree collection. She suggested that the bookplate itself be printed as a memorial to Karen Axness. And I suggested that we use the artwork from the memorial invitation. Karen Fowler thought that would be wonderful. Would it be OK if we used your artwork? Would you like to be involved in the design of the bookplate? I'll call you and talk more about this with you.

I used a similar strategy to yours when signing up for classes at the university, though I tended to convert to no-credit rather than drop classes that I thought I might not ace. I was under the gun — economically — to finish my coursework rather quickly. I really couldn't afford to stay in school much beyond the basic four years. As it was, insurmountable obstacles (full classes, registration red tape) prevented me from taking all required courses in that time; it took an extra semester for me to finish. But I usually signed up for 21 credits a semester anyway, intent on making the best use of the university while I was here. (The UW Timetable always felt like a Christmas catalog to me: "I'd like this, and this, and this one too...") However, I was not willing to damage my GPA for such courses as, "Fellini: an in-depth analysis." I was, after all, majoring in Geography, not film criticism. Ironically, I usually did quite well in my no-credit courses. That Fellini class, for example, was filled with graduate students majoring in Film, and the teacher was pleased to get a textual/thematic analysis of *Citizen Kane* from me. Where I thought I'd be handicapped by lack of acquaintance with knowledge of lighting technology and film-making techniques on which subjects my fellow students were experts—it turned out that my unique (literary) perspective tended to give me an advan-

tage over them with this particular teacher. As it turned out, my grade in the Fellini course could only have helped my GPA. Even more ironically, no potential employer has ever asked me what my college GPA was; it turns out to have been a completely silly worry. Ah well.

[SC] There is far too much good stuff here to pick out the bits I liked best, but I would like to point out that I appreciate your Mad Media comments. I have yet to go to one, but I have thought of supporting them a few times. I seem to have fallen off their mailing list. I am glad they are hanging in there and doing well. If they continue I can image Mad Media someday hosting 4000 people at a monster con at the Frank Lloyd Convention Center and surrounding hotels. Then I can say to myself, "Ah, I remember when..."

YCT me re: Grace. You are very welcome. I think you set the ideal example of how to manage an apa membership.

YCT Vicki re: the alienation of labor, it is certainly true that, following college, people often follow the lure of jobs to new homes rather than returning to the neighborhoods and small towns where they grew up. But work is not the only thing that draws them away. I grew up in a claustrophobic small town. Work had nothing to do with my determination to live out my life in a city.

YCT Tracy re Madisonians wearing cheeseheads, it is an odd thing. I see them in stores around here but I have never seen anyone really wear one around town. I image there are nervous and furtive buyers here who keep their cheeseheads carefully stored in a closet until they are ready to leave town. Then, when it is time to go, they quickly toss them in the car and head to a city culturally and politically light years from Madison (like Green Bay.) Finally, sitting in the football stands, they smile slightly as they carefully place the yellow wedge on their heads while surrounded, and made anonymous, by thousands of other foam fetishers.

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## Bill Bodden

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[JG] We voted for Ralph Nader this year, too. Did you hear that he did better in Madison than anywhere else in the country? Nader even outpolled **Dole** here! This is, of course, in central Madison, not Dane County, although he did pretty well county-wide too. Apparently Nader won 8,587 votes in Dane County (4.5% of the total), and those votes accounted for more than one percent of his votes nationally. Nader won more votes in Dane County than he did in some entire states, including *Iowa*! The *Cap Times* said that Nader picked up

more votes in the 6th Aldermanic District alone than in the entire state of Louisiana. The paper didn't say whether the 6th district gave him more votes than *Iowa*, but I wouldn't be surprised. The sixth district, by the way, is the one that borders Lake Monona on the near east side. He got 20% of the vote there, and 18% of the vote in the neighboring second district which runs along Lake Mendota. The east side, for all you out-of-town Turbans is the side of town that Union Street is located; also, **Pat Hario, Tom Havighurst, and Jim Nichols.**

Nationally, Nader pulled in 0.6 percent of the vote, which was a little disappointing and mostly due to the fact that Nader didn't really campaign actively. I certainly didn't have any illusions that he could win but my hope was that he would pick up enough votes so that both the Democrats and Republicans (with their own third party renegade, Perot), would realize that a growing proportion of the electorate was dissatisfied with the major parties and most importantly, *still voting...*

That doesn't seem to be the interpretation major newspapers are reading into the election results, however. The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* ran an article the Sunday after the election with a list of "lessons" learned this year, and one of them was that the two-party system is robust and that third parties are not viable. I think that's mostly spin control, myself. The horrifically low voting turn-out and the growing list of third party nominees for president looks to me like evidence that a dynamic, strong third party candidate might do very well, if we ever get campaign reform passed.... And I think the major parties should be getting very nervous. But it would have been nice if the message had been a lot louder.

[SC] Much as I like and respect Ralph, he was a seriously lousy candidate. I voted for him to send a message, not to reward his anti-campaign. If he had bothered to crawl out from under his desk and do a little campaigning, he might have done well in midwestern states like Iowa. Iowa went with Clinton due to a lack of sane choices. Dole actually did worse in states like Iowa where he spent a lot of money and time, than he did in states where he campaigned less. I agree with Michael Moore that there are a lot of people ready for a progressive message, but you have to get the message out to them.

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## Jim Brooks

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[JG] Sorry for throwing you for a loop with our new *Union Street* masthead. We thought it would be nice to radically change our "look," since with Scott's abdication, our participation in the apa changes significantly. // Well of course our address ends up in dead center of the graphic. Are we not the center of the universe? // It's been really neat to see how many people actually noticed the placement of our address in our masthead graphic.

I'm intrigued. Why do you think that it is a "damn dangerous statement" to say that anything anyone chooses to devote their time and energy to is important? It seems to me that there are far too many people who are convinced by our culture that the *only* activities that are important are those that either make or consume money. If you devote chunks of time to activities that do neither, you are often criticized for wasting your time in frivolous, unimportant things.

[SC] Although the loss of four pages of your golden prose is undoubtedly a disaster, methinks you have exaggerated the scope of the loss a teeny bit. Good luck recreating it. I was moved to smile and laugh through much of your stuff, but those banjo jokes were painful.

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## Lisa Freitag

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[JG] Amazingly, you are defying all expectations and seem to be writing *more* after William's birth! Thank you for some really wonderful essays.

...Among which, I really enjoyed your response to **Tom's** and my discussion about MacDonald's subtextual advertising. I totally agree with you that it is the embedded assumptions, not the obvious associations, that are most bothersome in modern advertising. As you suggested, it is not that we have come to believe that the right toothpaste will lead us to the love of our life, but we do seem to have bought into the idea that conformance within a fairly narrow range of appearance standards is necessary for successful social intercourse of any kind. I think too, that the larger embedded assumptions are more and more affecting codes of morality and even our sense of what life is *for*. Look, for instance, at the way consumption has become a modern *virtue*. We are letting our neighborhoods and inner cities die, while at the same time pouring vast resources into communities structured around shopping malls... If an activity or a place does not have profit associated with it, it is deemed superficial. A national park that

does not provide profit to the private sector should be sold to a concession that can capitalize on the resource. A town center that benefits non-spending potential customers who are merely encouraged to stroll through the area enjoying the view and the air, is a waste; it is better to build malls where this nonproductive strolling can be generate more productive spending....

I think too, that the strongest, current design movement demonstrates the idea that our culture considers consumerism to be a virtue. Grunge type, grunge architectural design, punk fashion, punk music (maybe?), can all be described on some level as designed to look (or sound or feel) primitive in some manner. Paradoxically, however, creation of these artforms requires high tech production methods. The example I am most familiar with is grunge type: It looks like hand-lettered type, or perhaps a photocopied or scratched up typeface originally created with press-on letters. But if you see type like this in a magazine or a TV ad, you can be sure that it is not a low tech graphic at all; it is in fact, a carefully designed font that depends on all the technology that produces postscript Palatino, and more. The same goes for Grunge architecture or interior design. The rafters and duct work are all visible, the brickwork is exposed, the wood seems to be unstained, but it is all a façade to merely *look* primitive and unfinished. You have to pay big bucks to purchase that look. It seems to me, sometimes, that this whole design movement is a crass buyout of the old beat and hippie movements whose style was anti-consumerism, anti-establishment, back-to-nature, etc. The "look" of people associated with those philosophies has been subverted to sell the very kinds of values that are antithetical to the original philosophies. \*sigh\*

[SC] Thank you for your marvelous Worldcon reflections. I enjoyed reading about it all, but I think my favorite bit was your Traditional Adventure with Kurt and Scott.

By all accounts we missed a pretty good convention in LA.

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## Hope Kiefer/Karl Hailman

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[JG] The toy foods from **Steve's** cover fell off ours too. We threw our toys into a plastic baggie and stapled it to the cover.

[SC] YCT Pat, we are also Working Assets customers. It is a nice feeling, being a customer of theirs. I don't

know how much good it does or how the deal stacks up financially, but it feels good and I like that a lot. I laughed at the image of Joy, the "phone slut." The phone companies deserve it.

YCT us, thank you. Your cautionary advice to keep Rock Island our secret is probably wise, but most of the campers I have known just don't want to go to the trouble it takes to go out there. Most will find the idea of having to carry everything in and out too much work to possibly be worth it. Jeanne and I are finally mastering it after many years of trial and error. A lot of hardier folks prefer to climb a thousand foot rock face or run a raging river rapids after setting up camp. Rock Island is too quiet for them. I'm not going to worry until they decide to build a bridge out there.

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### Pat Hario

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[JG] Very interesting point about Martha Stewart's art being "just" household craft, and so, by definition, ... [something that] all women must, as a matter of course, be proficient in...." I think you've got something there. If Martha was into, say, oil painting and structural steel art, she would never — no matter how popular — be seen as threatening to so many because those arts are not ones there is any expectation that any group should be able to do "naturally." On the other hand, if those house guys on TV were shown to do all their own work (rather than bringing in crews, etc.), that might seem as threatening to guys as Martha is to some women. Home repair is something that guys are "supposed" to be able to do, after all. It might be fun to do a guy parody of Martha Stewart, some macho hunk who does all his own car repair, home renovations, and yard work. He would also be the star player in several amateur sports teams and effortlessly maintain a high level position in a giant corporation.

You know, there may already be guy-analogs of Martha Stewart. How often have you heard guys scornfully deride guys they hear about who have successful careers and still get praised by the women in their lives for being sensitive and caring? Maybe the Alan Alda syndrome is the guy equivalent of our Martha Stewart syndrome?

I think you are right about the more stringent requirement for astronauts these days. Scientific degrees are required now. In the early years, the tests were mostly physical. The astronauts' wives in Shepard's and Grissom's classes were scrutinized for their potential publicity value. The first astronauts had to have "picture perfect" families. They had to be married and they had to be married to stay-at-home

moms. There were plenty of applicants who were turned down solely because they lacked the prerequisite "typical American family." I wonder if that is true at all, any more. I think it might still be a factor, since NASA is still pretty conscious of bad publicity. On the other hand, astronauts don't get nearly the volume of publicity that they used to get, and deviant wives might not be deemed that much of a liability anymore.

[SC] I am very glad that you are feeling better about your house.

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### Andy Hooper

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[JG] What a **great** mailing comment! The only thing I know of Zappa is what he **looks** like. I cannot remember ever hearing his music and knowing I was listening to Zappa. So I intended, at first, to merely **skim** this issue of yours. But you caught me and I read it carefully all the way through. I thought it was an **excellent** essay. Thank you.

[SC] Thanks should also go to **Tom Havighurst** for succeeding in pissing you off enough to inspire this eloquent piece. I have heard Zappa songs from time to time, but I have never listened to a whole album of his. I am largely unfamiliar with his music, but, like Jeanne, that didn't prevent me from enjoying your zine.

I sense that you are right when you say that "...rock journalism is such a fundamentally empty pursuit," but I would like to hear why you think so. Is the recording industry too corrupt? Are rock performers too erratic? Has the music gone stale? Carry on Andy, I could read your stuff all day.

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### Bill Humphries

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[JG] Good essay for "24 Hours in Cyberspace," Bill. I think this is the clearest, best exposition I have read of yours in relation to the study of the so-called "tort explosion." Thanks for re-printing it here.

[SC] I was finishing reading the apa last weekend when 60 Minutes came on. There was a story about a NASCAR driver (Tim Richards?) who recently died of AIDS. They showed us clips from the Charlotte Speedway you described in your zine. Impressive place.

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### Barbara Jensen

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[JG] Welcome, Barb! What a great introduction zine. I liked your comments on how we seem to be

different people in different groups, but that who we really are is actually a sum of all those characters. (My sympathies are with you when you're called "Barbie." Scott is apan **Spike Parson's** cousin, so I frequently see her family. And I find myself consciously using the name I know her by — Spike — in a slightly louder than usual voice in response to their name for her, "Patty." Hardly anyone calls me "Jeannie" any more, which I am grateful for.)

I look forward to lots of good, non-fluffy discussions with you here in *Turbo*.

[SC] Welcome. What a fine first zine. I can see that you will fit right in. The criticism I have often heard about Madison fandom is that we are very insular and self-oriented. I believe that is somewhat true which is why I think it is important for us in *Turbo* to reach out to our friends around the country, especially to folks in nearby Chicago, Milwaukee and Minneapolis.

I think you will find yourself at home in *Turbo* from several points of view. There are many people here who are interested in music and at least one other musician, **Jim Nichols**. As a psychologist you will find yourself in good company with other professionals related to your field such as **Bill Dyer**, who is also a psychologist, and the returning **Bill Hoffman**, who is a psychiatrist, and, of course, **Lisa** who is an MD. Of course there is feminism and SF which pretty much draws all of us together.

"I once had nothing but a postcard stereotype of Greece and now the smells and sights and sounds of it are forever a part of me." Yes, well phrased. That is something very important that I also get out of traveling.

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### Jim Nichols

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[JG] I'm glad to hear that you are hoping to do another performance event at WisCon, and I hope (as programming chair) to talk with you about it eventually. I will try to email you a couple ideas for you for production ideas from Tiptree's work if you are still looking for them.

[SC] I am glad you have gotten past your bout of writer's block and we have you back writing for us with more gusto. I was a bit concerned that we might lose you as a contributor there for awhile.

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### "Cogitamus Ergo Festivamus"

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[SC] This time last month Jeanne and I were frantically finishing up our apa contribution so we could jump in our car on Friday and head North to ReinConation 6 in Minneapolis. ReinConation is one of those small cons, like Potlatch and Corflu, that is succeeding in attracting us, as opposed to Worldcon or large regionals like MiniCon or WindyCon. We like the feel of the smaller cons. The most attractive features are the high percentage of people we know and want to hang out with coupled with a relaxed, but still interesting, track of programming. These cons are often held in interesting places that we want to spend time exploring as well.

One of the nice parts about my work schedule is the three day weekends, so we chose to make maximum use of it by leaving Madison around noon on Friday and taking the scenic route up to Minneapolis along the Mississippi River. I pulled up to the DNR building promptly at noon to find Jeanne waiting with a big package in her hands.

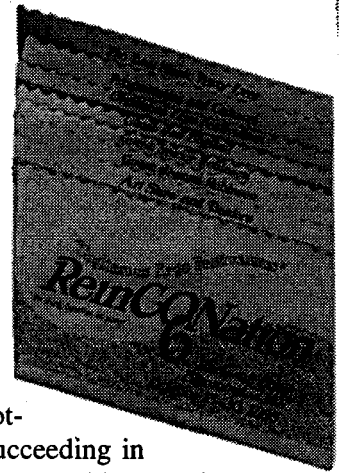
"Do you know what day it is?" she said with a big smile.

Thinking fast, I blurted back, "No, but our anniversary is a week from today."

She frowned, sat down and looked at her watch. "Shit," she said. "Whew," I thought. She put the present in the trunk and decreed that I must not open it until the next week. So we carried it up to Minneapolis and back unopened.

Jeanne suggested we drive west out of Madison on Hwy 14 and switch over to Hwy 60 in Gorham, about halfway to the Mississippi. This route took us most of the way right along the Wisconsin River to Prairie du Chien. We embarked almost exactly one week past the height of fall color. It was beautiful anyway. The day was very sunny and there were still quite a few leaves on the trees and the landscape was full of greens and yellows and browns.

I lived in the Prairie du Chien area for about two years before I moved to Madison in 1987. I hadn't been back since. The town had grown quite a lot due to the expansion of the 3M Corp. operations, but due also, I think, to the success of riverboat gambling. We didn't take the time to stop or tour around much, but I would like to stop back again next year if we take a drive to see the



full fall color. Jeanne and I used to laugh about the restaurants in the area. I don't think the locals ever noticed they were named The Black Angus, Blue Heaven, The White House, The Pink Elephant, etc. The exception was The Barn. I always wanted to suggest they paint the place red and change the name to The Red Barn so it would fit in with the "theme." I don't suppose they would appreciate the idea.

We drove north along the Wisconsin side of the river on Hwy 35 crossing into Minnesota finally at Prescott just as it was turning dark. We wanted to get to the con in a reasonable time for dinner so we didn't really stop anywhere except for gas. It took us around six hours. Driving on a winding two lane road was tiring, but the scenery along the river was well worth it.

ReinConation was held at the famous (for Minicon) Radisson South hotel just off the Interstate on the south edge of the city. The Radisson is a very big but very nice hotel. It has lovely rooms and many fast elevators. The restaurant was good enough that we elected to eat there twice. The drawbacks to the hotel were, first, that it was close to nothing except a gas station and a chain restaurant. You had to drive if you left the hotel to do anything else. Second, the room rates of \$100 per night. ReinConation's 150 members were swallowed up in this hotel. It was only one of dozens of events going on in the hotel at the time so a room rate deal could not be negotiated.

We met Jim Hudson and Diane Martin right away when we arrived and went out to dinner with them and Ariel. Jim knew an interesting all-you-can-eat place close by that specialized in very good, and even healthy, food. We didn't get back in time for opening ceremonies so we hung out for awhile in the con suite. It was particularly fun to run into Lisa and Greg and little William, who was being quite entertaining.

Programming started on Saturday at a very sensible 11:00 am. We looked over a borrowed copy of a program (we were having trouble running down the registration person and didn't actually get registered until Saturday evening) and decided we could take a few hours to do a day trip. We chose to visit the Mall of America a short way down the interstate.

We've never been there before. I imagined that it would be surrounded by acres of flat parking lot like most

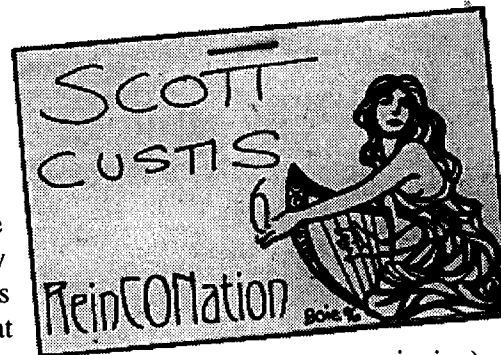
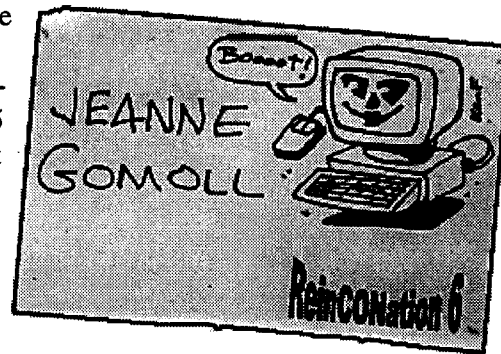
other malls. Instead there was a maze of roads and signs ultimately shuffling you into a cavernous parking ramp structure. I chose a spot near a door and made mental notes of color schemes and row numbers for fear that once I stepped into the mall I would never see our car again in this lifetime.

What can you say about the Mall of America except that it was very big? We made two circuits of the place and strolled through the amusement park. We bought a couple things, but really didn't spend much money. It was all kind of depressing and troubling. Everything was pretty expensive because this isn't an outlet mall. Everything is at full price. In addition, there was very little evidence of a local, or small business, presence. Even the little kiosk stands in the corridors were mostly large national companies. Of course this is private property with a heavy security presence, so there are never any messy social activities like handing out flyers (unless you're a vendor selling something) or speaking to a crowd (except for Mary Tyler Moore doing a book signing) or begging or singing for small change.

What we have here is the result of a great many large corporations convincing the rest of us that shopping is entertainment. Spending money is what we should do for fun. Once-upon-a-time, we shopped and spent money for things we needed and did other things for fun. Now we shop for fun in big crowds in vast private areas where everything is oriented toward making it easy, convenient and "fun" to spend money (the restaurants, the amusement park to dump the kids who might distract you, the money machines and the lack of anything that might bring people together in some kind of group awareness.) Everything is aimed at you as an individual. Nothing much suggests you might be part of a community of the people around you.

Of course State Street in Madison is a shopping area too, but first and foremost it is a public street. Shopping exists there with a lot of other stuff that may have nothing to do with shopping but everything to do with exercising individual rights and functioning as a community.

What, have I never been to a mall before? I guess it was the size and the scale of Mall of America that got me thinking about all this. Jeanne and I had a long discussion about this after our visit to the Mall; her comments to Lisa were catalyzed by the same experience.





We got back to the hotel in time to catch the last half hour of Jan Bogstad's excellent slideshow presentation about her four months in China around the time of the International Women's Conference. From there it was dinner with Terry Garey, Ken Fletcher and Giovanna Fregni at a nice Chinese place.

The Cabaret later Saturday night was one of the many high points. This is my second Cabaret and it is one of the things I love about this con. It started at 9 pm and went on for two or three hours of music and readings highlighted by a dazzling light show. I always like the need to patronize the cash bar to make sure the con doesn't lose money and I did my best to drink up. Spider Robinson was the headliner, but I actually preferred Reed Waller's music. David Emerson and **Barb Jensen** were wonderful, as were the readings by Terry Garey and Elise Matthesen.

Saturday night was a late one. Jim Minz and the Tor group threw a great party in one of the poolside Cabana rooms and Jeanne and I hung out there talking with an ever-changing mix of friends (Barb Jensen, Lisa Freitag, **Karen Babich**, David Emerson, **Michael Shannon** and others) until 3 am.

Sunday we stayed for two program items before starting home. Jan Bogstad moderated a panel on "Gender Identity in Cyberspace Fiction" which was supposed to include Eleanor Arnason, but she didn't make it to the

con. The other panel participants were relatively unprepared. Jan tossed out some interesting questions, but wound up giving the most thoughtful answers herself. Jeanne and I were silently rooting for Jan as she gradually took over the panel and gave a very interesting talk that could have kept us in our seats easily another hour. This was the second time this weekend we were dazzled by Jan at a program item. We were a little nervous about going to ReinConation this year with Jan as one of the guests of honor. Jeanne and Jan's rocky past goes back a long way. But this weekend we sincerely enjoyed seeing her again and listening to her. We complimented her both times on her panels and she seemed very pleased. Perhaps the bad old days really are gone. That would be wonderful.

The other program was a fan reading with Terry Garey, David Emerson, Jeff Schalles, Geri Sullivan and Denny Lien. A very fine group of readers who chose great work. Another hour gone too quickly.

We gave Michael Shannon a lift back to Madison as we hurried back hoping to pick up our finished apas. Thanks **Kim**.

Oh ... and the present turned out to be two beautiful beer steins. They are part of a series of small breweries of Wisconsin steins. Each year a new stein comes out decorated with the logos of Wisconsin small breweries.

—Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll  
14 November 1996