



Union Street

A joint zine by Jeanne Gomoll & Scott Custis

Official Business

[JG & SC] We second Tracy's nomination of Mike Peterson.

© Kim 'n' Kathi

[JG] Horrible but funny story about the accident. It's amazing how much trouble one can get into just sitting around at a family gathering.

[SC] We have a similar basement sink contraption that needs replacing, but I hadn't thought about the problem of actually hauling the damn thing out of the basement. Thanks for the warning, I think I will continue to put the project off for awhile longer. So what is the rate for hiring Kelley to be a cement hauler?

© Karen Babich

[JG] Roger Black is the type designer who says that good design can change the world. He also wrote:

"Frederick Goudy said that anyone who would use letter spacing on lowercase would steal sheep"

"The easiest way to spot sloppy typography is the number of widows. Purists will actually go back and rewrite the text to avoid widows, and will kill anyone who leaves a widow at the top of a column"

"Whatever you do, do not spell out secret messages with the drop initials. It has been done."

"The only drawback to pullquotes is that some writing definitely does not deserve to be excerpted and served up in beautiful blocks of type. The answer to this recurrent problem is the precis. Rewrite the stuff. Sum-

marize it. Make little lists. A good designer never lets a bad writer get in his way."

"If editors are afraid of type, they abhor white space. They can't stop thinking of all the words they could get into those 'holes.' But for readers these holes are a godsend. It's the needed oxygen in a magazine . . . The basic concept is not to forget about white space as a tool. Correctly used, white space gives more emphasis to a certain aspect of your design than a big painted arrow across the page."

"A side note of caution here: photographers have a hard time being funny because they take themselves almost as seriously as writers. Half of them, it seems, live in Washington, D.C.—a very serious city. The other half are of the roving 'cowboy photographer' variety. Also very serious. This second group continually says things like, 'Damn, I missed Afghanistan completely. Maybe if I go to Managua something will happen there.'"

I like reading his stuff.

[SC] Good comment to **Whump** on nuclear power. Congratulations on the Jello-O cookbooks. "Apple Tuna Mold, Orange-Glazed Duck, etc." you made those up, right? Those recipes don't really exist do they? Yikes!

© Bill Humphries

[JG] I enjoyed your description of the Gay Pride Parade. Volunteering as a safety monitor sounds like a fun way to do the parade. I've managed to see it twice. Have they renamed the first event? You called it "The Women's Motorcycle Contin-
gent." I used to know it as "Dykes on Bikes." My comments at my first SF Gay Pride Parade aroused some guffaws from the people around me. I sat on some of that dangerous scaffolding and waited for what my brother warned me would be "Dykes on Bikes." Unfortunately I said the first thing that popped into my mind when I saw the bikers approach.

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Peerless Press (SC) #90

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"Oh, I thought they were going to be riding *ten-speeds*." That's when the guffaws came in.

I don't think it is a good thing to support nuclear power by saying its alternative is worse. Not because the side effects of coal-based power aren't bad, but because it's a distraction to suggest that there are only two possibilities: CHOOSE ONE NOW. We can't ignore the side effects of any of the methods we chose to make power; we've got to stay focused on finding safe alternatives.

I bought a book through Amazon.com the other day—*Designing Web Graphics*, on the recommendation of my instructor at the DGEF workshop. I found Lynda Weinman's site on the web, clicked for ordering information and was sent to Amazon. Apparently Weinman gets a cut of the book's price when people buy from Amazon after linking from the author's site. I believe Amazon calls this their "Associate Program." This might be a way for specialty stores to make use of Amazon if this Associate Program is offered generally.

[SC] Sounds like you had a great time on the 4th of July, except for the Mime Troupe's performance. I am surprised you got through that without flipping out and opening fire with an Uzi. I have a really low threshold for mimes (like puns only much worse.)

You also deserve high praise for being a safety monitor at the Gay Pride Parade. It sounds like it would have been a pleasure to be a part of a such an enlightened security team. Part of the advantage of working security is ending up with good stories to tell and working a bomb threat is a doozy. Good job and I hope you have a good time again next year.

YCT us on nuclear power, you said, "...but I think the long term storage of wastes may be a more tractable problem than mitigating greenhouse gases." Well said from the safety and comfort of San Francisco where there is virtually no chance that a nuclear waste repository will be built. But that has been the big problem for the past 40 years or so, where to safely put the waste for storage for many thousands of years? What the industry and government have been spending all this time discovering is that there isn't anyplace to put it. No one wants it in their state and there are almost no locations that can guarantee safety for thousands of years and there is no technology for storage devices that can safely store something for that long. So it all dangerously piles up in "temporary" storage. Storage and the huge risks of operating nuke plants from spills, leaks and accidents are the continuing problems of nuclear power.

© Jae Adams

[JG] Neat musings on travel and home. I like how traveling far from home (or reading the stories of people traveling far from home) boomerang back into our consciousness of how we see our own neighborhoods. Suddenly they are destinations rather than (merely) starting points.

Wow, the Art Fair carried their t-shirt design through even the smallest paperwork, that vehicle slip. I loved the Rampaging Robot-Artist shirt from this year's art fair, but am keeping it pristine for Potlatch.

[SC] Re: "Those Old Masters" a very eloquent "rant." Thanks for running that piece.

© Georgie Schnobrich

[JG] Congratulations on getting a new printer. Ah yes, the *Aurora* font: Korina, I believe. Getting our heads imaged set marked our "high tech" watermark. Before that, we used to transfer them onto the layout pages from sheets of rub-on lettering. And before that — (shudder) — we used to ask our typists who didn't own IBM Selectrics to leave the appropriate number of spaces so that Selectric owners could go in and type italics and boldfaced words into the text. Let's not even discuss how we used to justify text occasionally when the layout called for it. . . .

I know what you mean about the "best moment." If I happen to be ready to write an article or do an illustration at the very moment I am most enthusiastic about the job's possibilities, it often turns out better than I expect. The trick is, I think, to learn to catalyze that "best moment" feeling. I rather think that this is what professionals learn to do. I can do it sometimes. I do it frequently at work — most often, by dividing the larger task up into a number of smaller jobs. The very act of planning it will often kick start my creative momentum.

I wonder if the modern-well-off-people's kitchen and its relocation to the center of the house involves a societal recognition that all parties eventually find their centers in the kitchen? You're right, though, that windows seem to have become less of a priority in kitchens than they used to be, and you're probably right, too, that people don't notice this much since they don't envision themselves working in the kitchen very often. Parties don't need windows, after all.

[WARNING: Plot spoiler coming up. If you haven't read *The Sparrow*, skip the next paragraph.]

About *The Sparrow*.... The major "shock" that I felt after reading the book had to do with Emilio and

his partner's situation as they toured around with the army watching mass executions of children . . . and then being faced with the choice of either eating those children's flesh or starving. However, your comments on the layered meanings of Emilio's rape was much closer to the Tiptree judges' reaction to the novel, and has a lot to do with why they chose the book for the award. Indeed, why should a rape be *more* harrowing for an attractive man for whom the concept of macho is an ingrained, cultural "given," than for women who suffer such attacks regularly on Earth? The thought-provoking aspect of this mental discussion provoked, for the judges, their sense of gender-bending.

© Michael Shannon

[JG] What's the difference between East and West Coast Swing? And can we hang a gross generalization about the difference between the two coast cultures on it?

[SC] In your comment to **Bill Bodden**, you talked about addiction which I think is an often overdramatized element of the drug legalization discussion. There is so much misinformation out there. There are thousands of occasional recreational cocaine users who never succumb to "addiction." Heroin is probably absolutely addictive to anyone who uses it for long, but kicking the habit is said to be less physically and emotionally difficult for most people than kicking nicotine (which is similarly addictive). Marijuana has never been shown to be classically addictive, but is somehow supposed to be a "stepping stone" to harder drugs. This has always puzzled me because, from my experience, pot feels as different from LSD or coke as it is from alcohol. Liking pot doesn't necessarily mean you will like other substances. Pill popping is likely to result in an addictive habit, but, again, cigarettes are considered a much tougher addiction to break. A person can become an addict to alcohol from the very first drink, yet the risk of succumbing to an extremely debilitating addiction to booze does not keep it off the market. The drug war is nothing but hypocrisy and ignorance feeding political ambitions.

© Tracy Benton

[JG] Thanks for the lovely explications of the books recommended to me by the diagnostic program. I suspect that the number of people who've participated in the project is just too small right now, and the only matches the program was capable of making were of books that most of the (small)

sample had all liked a lot. However, the program seems unable to make distinctions yet, among people who like some classics and not others. For instance, I went back and edited my preferences by inserting a rating for *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*. Actually I haven't finished either and so hadn't originally rated them. I changed my rating to the most negative vote possible, and the diagnostic program *still* recommended the rest of Tolkien to me, based I'm sure, on my positive ratings of *other* SF/F classics. On the other hand, despite rating highly all the Le Guin novels I've read, the program failed to recommend other Le Guin titles....

If the program has confused the two of us, perhaps you would be so kind as to register and rate a bunch of books, and let me know what it recommends I read.

And thanks for your 1997 reading list, reviews and recommendations. My 1997 books are—

City of Darkness, City of Light, by Marge Piercy. Excellent history from a feminist perspective. I love how Pierce shows the relevance and indeed the historical connection between the French revolution and contemporary movements.

Nadya, by Pat Murphy. A wonderful adventure story. A marvelous use of metaphor: werewolf as ultimate outsider, and perfect mythic representation of bisexuality.

Amnesia Moon, by Jonathan Letham. Weird. fun. Alternate history.

The Sweetheart Season, by Karen Joy Fowler. Wonderful, evocative and *funny* fantasy about life of a young girl in US 1940s, from the point of view of her daughter. Betty Crocker as the goddess, what an inspiration.

Golden Nineties, by Lisa Mason. A not very interesting alternate universe novel.

Night Sky Mine, by Melissa Scott. Fascinating vision of evolved virtuality and people on the cusp of choice. It's never as simple as one would hope when it comes to big life choices.

The Fifth Sacred Thing, by Starhawk. Too new-agey for me. I kept thinking that it was much too convenient how magic seemed to be able to exactly replace all the conveniences of (our) modern life without any of its evil consequences.

Fair Peril, by Nancy Springer. One of the funniest fantasies I've ever read. Is it pop psychology or meta-mythological spinning? Or is it, two, two, two mints in one? How will I ever forget the hero's brave rescue of her daughter from "happily ever after."

The English Patient, by Michael Ondaatje. A wonderful but really surprising reading experience right after seeing the movie. I was surprised to see so many of the novel's themes so perfectly visualized, and yet so much of the plot distorted and re-arranged.

The Sparrow, by Mary Doria Russell. You all know what I think.

Evolution's Shore, by Ian McDonald. This was a Borders book discussion book. All we could figure out was that the author had been convinced by his editor that female protagonists were hot, but unfortunately he had no clue as to a believable woman's point of view. The African setting was terrific and riveting (and especially remarkable in that we didn't constantly get updates about what was happening in the "real" world), but the first-person stuff from the point of view of his female character, and especially her romantic feelings for her lover, were embarrassing.

"The Mountain Ways," by Ursula K. Le Guin. The Tiptree-winning novella about a world in which marriages always involve four people, two men, and two women. Each partner has a sexual relationship with one man and one woman; and a platonic relationship with one person of the opposite sex. A really thought-provoking book: the main character is deviant in the context of this society, and we think a lot about the whole concept of deviance and marriage through Le Guin's envisioning of something so different.

Black Wine, by Candace Jane Dorsey. A probable Tiptree nominee for 1997 about a young girl's journey from slavery to freedom and back on to more complex psychological and social places.

Remnant Population, by Elizabeth Moon. A fun book about a 70-year-old woman who makes first contact with aliens. What's the first thing she teaches them? How to clean up after themselves.

The Garden, by Melissa Scott. A very very very bad *Star Trek: Voyager* novel. Very bad. Warning. Read at your own risk. Main lesson: The universe punishes people with bad table manners.

Gaia's Toys, by Rebecca Ore. I loved this one for its startling rejection of the now-clichéd ideal of the lone cowboy on the web. In Ore's story, big government/business has learned to harness the power of the web, and discovered perhaps the ultimate reform of welfare. A really really scary book; makes 1984 seem not half bad.

Ruby Tear, by Rebecca Brand (pseudonym of Suzy McKee Charnas). A light but charming Vampire novel, not at all like Charnas's usual vampire stories. Theater people, art and interesting relationships remind me a little of Quinn Yarbro's mystery novel about theater folks (I forget the title).

Alias Grace, by Margaret Atwood. Atwood is amazing; *Alias Grace* is amazing. I expect I'll go back and re-read this eventually. The story is about an infamous murderer who may or may not have actually done the crime for which she was convicted. And it's about all the different kinds of ways we can wear aliases in life, and about how those aliases make life real confusing for everyone concerned. Atwood is sooo good.

Whiteout, by Sage Walker. A good SF story told from the point of view (mostly) of one of a 5-person marriage/business cooperative. The action takes place mostly in Antarctica and the story extrapolates from modern marketing and environmental science.

The Woman and the Ape, by Peter Høeg. If you liked *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, you will probably like this new novel by Høeg. It's not a mystery and is funny rather than gloomy, but the sarcastic, ironic tone is there. And besides that there's an amazingly SFish idea of a race of very intelligent apes who monitor our society and occasionally pop in to help us out, and once in a while, fall in love with humans and have the most amazing sexual adventures. This novel is not marketed as an SF book; you'll have to look for it in the literature stacks.

The Fortunate Fall, by Raphael Carter. Another book like *Gaia's Toy*, though not quite as scary, but just as cynical about the chances that individuals will be able to ride the romantic cyber-ranges. I was most interested in the hints of the holocaust-strewn history of this society, and amazed at myself for holding out for a romantic conclusion for the two lovers (one living, one virtual). At the Border's Book discussion, I kept championing the idea that if they were *really* in love, they would have found a way not to let the main character's lover's consciousness be dissolved.

Other Nature, by Stephanie Smith. Gerald Schoenherr (the Borders SF book guy) championed this book to win the 1995 Tiptree. I sure wish it had made it to the short list. A very disturbing book about the end of the human species and the new species that might replace us. Gender gets blurred in the new children, but Smith's idea seems to be that few humans would notice: we would be more likely to assume or imagine what is missing, to avoid recognizing how different the new generation had become. The story had an interesting format, too: it takes place on two days, separated by 9 months, and yet, at the same time, it covers a whole generation's time.

Leaning Toward Infinity, by Sue Woolfe. This book was included on the 1996 Tiptree short list, and I loved it. It's about a family for whom mathematical genius is handed down mother to daughter. There's some wonderful stuff about the gorgeousness of mathematical theory and also about what it means to be a daughter. Woolfe's writing reminds me a great deal of Margaret Atwood. High praise.

The Green Mile, by Stephen King. I showed up at Borders on the last Tuesday of July, rather than the first Tuesday of August which is the usual day for our book discussions. It was very embarrassing: that week's book discussion group was talking about children's literature. So I browsed for a while and picked up this book, sort of thinking that since it was about death row prisoners, that Scott would like to see it. But then I started reading it on the bus ride home, and within a chapter I was hooked. I stayed up most of the night and finished it the next night, way past my bedtime. It's a page-turner for sure, and one of King's better stories.

Bible Stories for Adults, by James Morrow. I was in the mood for irreverent, sly, sarcastic commentary on religion and morality, I guess. And I got it in this great anthology of short stories by the master of irreverent religious fantasy.

Eudora Pro, Volume 3.1. What can I say? We changed our Internet Provider. We bought new email software and I actually read the whole book. Not what you would call a page-turner, but fairly well-written documentation. And I *really* like Eudora.

I'm currently reading a non-fiction book called *Pythagoras' Trousers: God, Physics and the Gender Wars*, by Margaret Wertheim. More on this later, I'm sure.



I was struck with how many books you have re-read in the past year, Tracy. I mostly read new books rather than re-reading. Sometimes I like to think that I will re-read well-loved books, but when it comes down to it, there always seem to be so many new books to read that I can't bear to give up my scarce reading time to those already read. Sometimes I re-read parts of books I love, but I am almost always more eager to start new ones. Sometimes, like these past couple weeks, I am almost frantic to read and gobble up book after book in a row, but still my to-read shelf overflows. I tend to add books to that shelf rather more frequently than I remove them.

© Lisa Freitag

[JG] It's hard to believe any court would attempt to tell an artist that they are legally barred from "drawing anything obscene." I would think that such a ruling would be as self-evidently unconstitutional as forbidding someone from writing or speaking, no matter what the topic. Although I would disagree with the idea of barring someone from publishing what they wrote or said, I wouldn't be as surprised to hear about it, although I would be surprised at a *blanket* ruling. I mean, even Larry Flint wasn't barred from publishing *anything* by the lower courts; he was

specifically barred from publishing *Hustler*.... I don't understand what interest any court has in what this guy inflicts upon *himself* in the course of drawing. They certainly can't contend that creating art is equivalent to distributing it, not to mention, forcing it on anyone.

We should get our tax accountants together: what a scene it would be. *Fargo* accent meets the sustainable-farming Marxist. Ya sure, workers unite.

I agree with you that there seem to be a huge number of people still very much into fashion, but the economist whose theories I reported was attempting to explain a very real phenomenon. Apparently, retail clothing sales are actually experiencing a long-term slump. The theory about people's change in perception about clothing was what she offered to explain the phenomenon, and it rang true for me and lots of people I know.

[SC] "*Does an irresponsible society deserve free speech?*" Very good question. My tentative answer is that we need the free speech if we are ever to hope to improve ourselves. I hope I am right about that.

Your essay on obscenity, pornography and censorship was fascinating. This is the first I have heard about this case. My theory is that the Supreme Court refused to hear Michael Diana's case because they saw the material as unworthy and weak. It shouldn't work that way, but I agree with you that because it is a particularly excretable comic book with a very limited appeal, the Court refused to take it seriously as art. Probably what will happen is that Florida will be emboldened by this decision and choose next to pick on some novelist or filmmaker who will be able to respond by raising some political hell. The Court will pay attention then.

I am completely in agreement with your conclusion that we must support totally free speech, whatever nastiness that includes. The nasty stuff IS a symptom of societal problems that restricting speech will hardly solve. We live in a society that is enthralled by violence and obsessed with unhealthy views of sex and gender. We cannot overcome these problems with restrictions on expression.

© Tom Havighurst

[JG] Congratulations on the new motorcycle. My brother Steve, has a motorcycle (a 450 Honda, I think) sitting in my parent's garage. Scott says it is a good motorcycle, but it needs a little work. (Steve keeps saying that he is going to fix it and sell it.)

Re my comments on WisCon you responded: "...but things fall apart and metamorphose and the future will come about in its own time." Good advice,

and I've certainly seen that process happen, and I *should* be comfortable with it by now. But, inevitably, I see things starting to change, and though I may not wish to stop the process, it seems like I want people who are going to be affected by it to at least recognize it, and say either "We don't want this to happen; let's *do* something," or "This is OK. It's time for this change." No doubt, it's a very irritating fault of mine. But in any case, I'm glad you came forward and volunteered to chair WisCon this year.

[SC] Pictures of your new bike would be nice, but a ride (when you're legal and feeling comfortable) would be nicer. BMW is a good choice I think, I worked with a guy at my last job who was a BMW bike enthusiast. He knew a lot about bikes and I think he chose a good brand. I have some sympathy for non-Harley riders since I've lived in Wisconsin. With Milwaukee and the Harley plant just down the road, locals seem even less accepting and friendly toward non-Harley riders than in other states. Have you noticed that?

I am looking forward to WisCon with you at the helm. It will be fun. What about you, Tom, what do you want to do that will make WisCon 22 special?

© Ruth Merrill

[JG] I liked your story of returning to your old, pre-divorce home, and was particularly enchanted with the line, "None of the trauma of our divorce had clung to the natural world." Sounds like your trip with your sons was a profoundly healing thing.

Excellent household hint. You don't see Heloise giving us such eminently useful suggestions. If I ever get a pet Iguana, I will make sure we keep him caged until he's too big for the VCR slot.

[SC] Yes, I enjoyed your whole opening piece on summer and congratulations on the new computer.

© Pat Hario

[JG] I've enjoyed Mitchum in some of his movies, but he's never been a real favorite for me. I can't imagine sitting down with him discussing politics, or books, or life . . . and I can't imagine a romantic partner with whom I couldn't do these things. If I had to choose between Mitchum and Stewart, I'd choose Stewart in a heartbeat. Actually, come to think of it, I think Scott reminds me of Jimmy Stewart a little bit.

You say to **Tracy** that Jeanne and cats don't go well together. Maybe Jeanne and dogs don't go together that well, either. We've had Elk's dog, Rosey here all week, and she's made a couple

messes that got me rather impatient. I am not feeling real positive right now about being a pet owner.

Thanks for the in-depth reply to our comments on WisCon, Pat. I agree with you that the least objectionable drastic change would be to do WisCon on a bi-annual basis. I'd like to see committees form for WisCon two years out; it was what made WisCon 20 planning work so well, I think. But we probably don't have enough people to do such a thing, and what I think would happen is that we'd all just take the interim year off and have a real hard time actually starting work on the next WisCon. We might even end up spending *less* time working on WisCon with two years that we would with one.

As for WisCon going away, yeah, I suppose the name could and probably would be changed if that happened. The essential thing in my mind would be that people who attend WisCon because it's the only feminist SF convention in the world, would know what convention was now being run and attended by the people they used to associate with WisCon. And if the runners of that convention wanted to continue calling it WisCon, even if it happened in some other state, I think that would be a remarkably silly thing to do, but given the reputation WisCon has built, it might feel appropriate to some people, kind of like how Broom Street Theater keeps their name, despite the fact that it no longer has a Broom Street Address. Keep in mind that nothing of the sort could possibly happen without the express permission of the SF³ Board and voting membership, since WisCon is imbedded in our bylaws and protected as a registered trade name. I think the reason Scott brought it up is that we've got a rather unique situation here: There is a large and growing interest in the things WisCon stands for and does, but a small and shrinking interest in the group of people that run it here in Madison. It doesn't necessarily follow that if the interest in running it from Madison disappears completely that the convention must also disappear. There has been some interest expressed in "adoption." Actually, even though the possibility of WisCon moving is still really far-fetched in my opinion, if it *did* move, and if it *did* keep the name, I think I'd feel rather complimented by it all.

I appreciate and sympathize with your feelings that there is some pressure involved with SF³ activities and the social group. But I think you and I are reacting to the situation slightly differently because of somewhat different social patterns we have individually developed. You seem to get involved with people, begin to enjoy them, and discover friends in them . . . and *then* choose whether or not to involve

yourself in projects with them. And that's a wonderful thing. My own *modus operandi* goes the other way. I tend to want to catalyze people interested in a common hobby or idea, or join a group of people already working together as a result of a common hobby or idea . . . and *then* begin forming friendships and get to know people personally. This is what happened for me with the local SF group, and with the feminist reading group I belonged to before that. The women in that reading group and I were all fresh out of college and got together based on recommendations from friends, professors and acquaintances. We gradually became great friends, but only after we'd forged this group and begun reading and meeting. Most of my friendships in fandom could be described in this way, too, and now I can see it happening all over again with the group that meets at Borders for book discussions. So maybe I am completely wrong in projecting my own idiosyncratic project-centered friendship approach on the group. I think there are very few people in the group any more whose main reason for belonging to it has to do with the work we do together. Maybe that's my problem, and is in fact not a problem at all for other people in the group. I think though that if we have become primarily a social group rather than a project-centered group, this may represent the biggest change of all from "the old days."

You mentioned the upcoming animated film, *Anastasia*: "Didn't Disney get enough flack from the changes they made in *Pocahontas* to raise a question about animating real-life stories?" you asked. That's still to be answered, I guess. *Anastasia* is not a Disney film. I forget what studio is doing it, but I seem to recall that the artists are ex-Disney artists, and the producers got real mad at Disney for refusing them the right to advertise on the Disney channel.

I thought about telling you that you could have found a picture of Robert Mitchum for your back page on the web real easy, but then I thought, no, I shouldn't bring it up. So I won't.

[SC] I can't say I was terribly attached to Brian Keith, but it was sad for me when I read about Robert Mitchum and Jimmy Stewart. I would not have thought about comparing them as you did. Their strengths and appeal as performers didn't seem to have much in common. Like John Wayne, Mitchum had a great face and voice and a distinctive physical attitude that permitted him to successfully play variations on a single character in most of his movies. This character had a lot in common with his real personality. Stewart, like Henry Fonda, was

a much more flexible actor, capable of creating memorable characters that were distinct from each other, though he possessed neither great looks nor voice. I miss them both.

Thanks for the thoughtful response on my WisCon piece. I can only hope that other folks will jump in with similar strong feelings. That is, after all, my real goal. I am not so much interested in proposing things to act on, as talk about. I think talking and thinking about WisCon's future is a good thing, but is often avoided.

Having an extra year to prepare WisCon would give us the luxury of time and the opportunity to plan more carefully. Not all of us need extra time or would do better planning, but the way WisCon works now, the option doesn't exist. Loaning WisCon out is an admittedly radical idea, but it is predicated on the assumption that WisCon has its own unique, dedicated national (and even international) feminist SF community and isn't restricted by time or place. Moving WisCon around would give more people a chance to host this community's annual gathering and celebration and give the Madison group a chance to rest up and recharge our batteries. I think the name would be part of the appeal, a signal to the rest of the community that this isn't any ordinary con, or an imitation of WisCon, it is the real thing. SF3 could screen applicants to pick a suitably appropriate fan group to do it in the same sort of spirit that Tiptree picks the right convention to host the Tiptree Award ceremony.

Of course both of these plans would play hell with our hotel relations, but I don't think the group should be enslaved into doing WisCon whether we want to or not because of a five year contract.

Much of my discussion is based on an idea I seem to have that the Madison group is running low on enthusiasm for running this convention. I may be all wrong about that. If I am wrong, then I see no reason to change things.

© Michael Rawdon

[JG] You say you miss subways in Madison. That reminded me of when I used to work for an urban planning office (a summer, college job). I did quality control on transportation survey tabulation, and discovered to my surprise that 20 or so people in Madison claimed to commute by subway. A shockingly under-utilized system!

[SC] I enjoyed your travel piece on your trip home to Boston.

ABCs at DGEF

[JG] 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 quick ways to travel from Madison to Peoria. Counting layovers in Chicago and Bloomington, either train or bus would take 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 long-time 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 comment about 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 all felt passionate. 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 stay in Peoria that night and travel back to Madison together. 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 a lot."

"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.

—Jeanne & Scott, 15 August 1997