



Welcome to *Union Street* #76 (Obsessive Press [JG] #178 and Peerless Press [SC] #78), the zine with the transmogriying seasonal masthead which this month celebrates Scott's new job. It comes to you from Jeanne Gomoll and Scott Custis, whose address is coincidentally 2825 Union Street, Madison, WI 53704-5136. Phone 608-246-8857. *Union Street* was created on a Macintosh Quadra 840av, and hardcopy was printed on a LaserWriter Select 360-printer. Text was created with Microsoft Word 5.1 and laid out with Aldus PageMaker 6.0. The *Union Street* Logo was designed with Adobe Illustrator 5.0 and Adobe Photoshop 3.0. All contents are copyrighted © by Scott Custis and Jeanne Gomoll, July 1996, for *Turbo-Charged Party Animal* APA #121. Members FWA.

Official Business

[SC] I cast my half-vote for **Steve Swartz** for OE. See my comment to **Andy Hooper** for more details.

Hope Kiefer

[SC] I missed the chance to inspect your new room during **Kim** and **Kathi's** party. Maybe you'll show it to me the next time I'm over? I really want to know how satisfied you are with the builders. We are always looking for recommendations for good construction people in case we launch a project.

How was the trip to Vegas?

Pat Hario

[JG] I was thinking about your comments to **Jae** about reading and how some people do or don't care if they know the author's gender. I think I am much more uncomfortable if I don't know the *character's*

gender than if the author's gender is a mystery. Certainly with respect to essays or articles I read in magazines, or short stories in an anthology, I do not notice the name, much less the author's gender, unless I make a point to look. The exception is when the piece of writing is itself *about* gender and I begin to consider the author as sort of character themselves to the extent that I reach for a handle on their point of view.

[SC] Very nice batch of comments this month, Pat. Re YCT me on money for administrative expenses, *Turbo* has not been much of an expense. We usually run off the business pages on our own laser printer rather than take them to Kinko's. *Turbo* doesn't really use that much paper, either, considering how much paper we keep on hand. Whenever I have needed money for something (say a trip to Kinko's if our laser printer is balking) there is a bit of "slush fund" in the *Turbo* account. As OE, I've probably experienced a higher level of turnover in membership than the last couple OE's. Folks who leave often donate the last few dollars in their accounts to the apa. Thus we've built up a little slush fund for occasional expenditures. I haven't needed to ask you all for more money, though the next OE may choose to.

YCT **Jae** on knowing the gender of writers, I always like to know something about the writer of a book I choose to read. I always look for little bios on the cover or in the back. Finding out what gender they are is just part of that. I also want to know where they live, how old they are, some of their background, etc. It annoys me to know nothing about a writer.

Tom Havighurst

[JG] *"so my take on McDonalds is that it is a corporation that spends billions of dollars to keep up an illusion around itself. I suppose that's what all corporations do to an extent."* I think you're right about that, Tom. Illusions are what big corporations sell, not actual products. Tobacco companies provide one of the most blatant example of the disparity between product and image, where the product kills and the image promises a better life. But all the big companies do it to one extent or another. It's interesting sometimes to watch TV commercials or look at magazine ads and figure out what feeling or idea the corporation is attempting to sell us, i.e. what they suggest we will get along with the product itself. It seems to me we are supposed to be buying sex when we purchase a lot of products: cars, clothing, fragrances, and cigarettes, too. Other commercials seem to suggest that we will find security or love when we buy their stuff.

McDonalds doesn't sell the usual though, you're right. If it weren't rather insidious, it might be more interesting. They certainly sell fantasy in several



commercial flavors, especially when they ally themselves with kids' blockbuster movies, but also—as you mentioned—with the weird magic land ruled by Ronald McDonald. McDonalds stores often offer a kids'-only area of playground equipment that supports this fantasy world idea. I think this must appeal to kids turned off by the usual "it's good for you," "finish your dinner" messages. So it's kind of weird, in the latest McArch campaign, to see McDonalds sending a message to adults that frankly contradicts that fantasy theme. I suspect that profit rates are beginning to plateau as age distributions change, and that McDonalds is attempting to focus on a potentially more profitable market than the kids. (The "not for kids" campaign may be a reverse psychology technique too; maybe the kids are going to rebel and buy the so-called "adult" sandwiches anyway.)

But you know, they've always projected a second message in their commercials (besides the fantasy land/escape message, I mean), and that is the appeal to people's desires for ideal families and relationships. (If you give your kids a happy meal, the whole family will be happy, and your kids will love you.) The whole-family-around-the-table-sharing-their-day ideal hasn't been working out for most people's schedule for a long time, and McDonalds, I think, has been trying to offer a different alternative. One parent (just one!) can take the kids to McDonalds, be free of meal preparation chores for a fairly economical price, and not feel guilty about their busy schedules. Taking your kids to McDonalds equals quality time.

[SC] OK, so I was a little skeptical when you were telling us about pubbing Family Circus cartoons in your zine. But I loved them. Thanks. I especially liked the one about the watch. It connected perfectly with my favorite vignette from *Pulp Fiction*.

I completely agree with Jeanne's comments above about McDonalds, but I can hardly single them out as the worst. Tobacco, liquor, pesticide, drug and auto companies all have far more insidious ad campaigns.

Andy Hooper

[SC] Congratulations on becoming an uncle. It is an experience I highly recommend. I have been an uncle since I was 12 and will soon be a grand-uncle for the fourth time this summer. None of my nieces or nephews sport a name quite as unusual and interesting as Elias, however.

I am glad you brought up some uncomfortable, but necessary, points in your comments about the OE race. I

am still a bit surprised that I am presiding over an election for the job, when a few months ago I was starting to doubt that anyone wanted to do it at all.

I certainly understand folks who feel peeved at either (or both) **Steve** and **Kim** for various things, but in the end they are both completely capable of running the apa. The choices these candidates represent are between keeping the apa in Madison or allowing it to move away, and between "change" (represented by Steve who has never been OE) and a "return to the familiar" (represented by Kim who is running for a second turn at *Turbo* OE.) I am stepping down partly because I feel it is time for a change and that is how I voted this month. I hope everyone in the apa helps choose a direction for the future.

It seems very appropriate to me that we are facing this choice for OE just now. The apa has been moving toward a more national membership makeup for some time and the local group is wrestling with issues surrounding the future direction of WisCon and SF3 as well. It seems clear to me that the local group is stagnating and needs the input of national fandom to ever hope to keep going. Why should it not be so with Madison's apa?

Bill Humphries

[SC] I'm glad you and Julie had such a fine time at WisCon. You were both a great help making it a success.

I'm sorry, as much as I love much of California, I just couldn't deal with earthquakes. What comes to my mind about them is that there is nowhere you can hide and nothing you can really do. We have cold weather and tornadoes here, but there is a lot you can do to prepare and deal with them. There is just no comparison.

It was such a nice surprise to get a few words from Julie! Yeah! Can we look forward to some stuff from her again? Maybe you two can do the joint membership thing again soon?

Kim & Kathi Nash

[JG] Yes, I've caught parts of the "Red Green Show" on PBS, each time by chance, and never for a whole episode. What a strange and weird and funny show. I finally stumbled upon it when Scott was home and so he probably has given up the idea that it doesn't exist and is just some weird dream that I told him about, convinced that it was real.

[SC] I wish I could have joined Dr Bill and the rest of you wild folks on the Terrace that night. Dr Bill is a great guy to party with. But he can be a bad influence. Since we've been hosting him on his post WisCon week in Madison, he has turned me on to some new things such as \$30.00-per-bottle tequila, imported vodka from the

freezer and, this year, \$70.00-per-bottle single malt scotch.

I used to think scotch was awful tasting stuff. **Pat Hario** first impressed me with a taste of single malt she brought back from her trip to the Glasgow Worldcon. So I was interested when Bill brought home three bottles of the stuff he found at Starr Liquor and offered to do a little tasting. Now I have a taste for the stuff, but I can't afford to do anything about it. It can be frustrating.

Great 4th of July party! The weather gods finally smiled on you (or you finally figured out how to pay them off.) You should really put in your order now for the same weather next year.

Jim Nichols

[JG] Conveniently, I read your zine early in the month, Jim. I talked with my sister, Julie, on the phone a week after WisCon and she asked me who "Jack Danger" was. I think a few more people than **Clay** were confused by your pseudonym.

Michael Rawdon

[JG] I think we would have to give you the prize for most complete autobiography if *Turbo* had such an award. What an amazing self-description. I don't think you've missed much except your favorite foods and color. You've provided us all with an extensive basis for conversation with you. Thanks!

I noticed a bit of a clash between the list of your favorite writers and the liberal politics you ascribe to yourself. With the exception of Kim Stanley Robinson, they're all pretty conservative politically. Have your favorite writers changed over time? Do you find reading past favorite books to be a little less enjoyable than when you first read them?

[SC] Welcome to *Turbo*. I was also blown away by your great intro zine. Most folks complain about doing an intro zine when they join, but it really helps to do one when a person is new to most of the rest of the membership. You might find it handy to keep a few extra copies of it on hand.

It's not surprising that you felt comfortable wading into *Turbo* after reading some back issues. I think you share a lot in common with many of us. Politically I would describe the apa as leaning to the left, though some of us are leaning a bit farther than others. Books are a common enthusiasm and so are comics and cartoons to varying degrees. And baseball is a well regarded here by most. I like to go to baseball games, but I have little interest in esoterica and number crunching. I will never set foot in the new Brewers stadium for political reasons. Instead I support the Cubs because of their attitude about who they are and where they play. I haven't seen any mention of

them shaking down the state of Illinois for a new stadium, for instance.

A passion for puns is a common flaw in the membership, I fear. Most of the afflicted try to keep it under control in these pages for the benefit of those of us with better taste in humor.

You will also find many Macintosh fans here. Your disinterest in beer is not unheard of in the group, but you may have to wade through the occasional piece about home brewing or blathering on about an exotic little brewpub somewhere. I will likely be guilty on those counts.

Jeanne and I also enjoy living up north. We hate really hot weather. This summer has been wet and full of mosquitoes, but wonderfully cool. Other cities we've considered living in are Minneapolis and Portland, OR. But with our nice, secure (AKA low-paid) state jobs, we are not likely to leave town anytime soon.

I met Karen once briefly, helping **Steve** move. I was on a WisCon panel with Jim Rittenhouse a while ago. It was a panel about apas. Jim was a great help and largely saved the panel. I resolved that doing panels was something I easily could, and should, resist.

Vicki Rosenzweig

[JG] I look forward to reading your con report of WisCon 20. I've seen a couple others of your con reports and found them enjoyably "meaty" and interesting.

Steve Swartz

[JG] I was struck [oof!] by your comment to **Jae**: *"I tend to use 'radical' to mean real different, so a radical social method would be a course of doing real different from what normally is done . . . I don't believe it can be used conservatively (because I believe conservatism is always the effort to preserve what is) . . ."*

Given your definition, I think conservatives these days would most certainly be classified as radicals, which I say because conservatives don't like the way things are today at all. They may like the economic set-up and work for more of the same, but socially, they hate the current situation. They don't like the fact that groups other than the elite have won access to political power; they hate the fact that families depend upon double incomes which conflicts with the conservative desire to recreate families "the way they used to be," but of course never actually were. In fact, they chafe under a whole series of realities that have altered family structures from the fantasy ideal of the 1950s. They hate the fact that women, blacks, gays, lesbians, disabled



groups, etc. have laws backing them up against discrimination. The very conservative laws that were passed in the last couple years against so-called "special privileges" for gays and lesbians were not at all an attempt to shore up the status quo; they were very much intended to roll the clock backwards, to eliminate advances made by these groups in the past generation. I view the attempts to repeal Affirmative Action as the same sort of regressive action. And, in fact, there are many examples of legal attempts on the part of conservatives, not to preserve what is, but to recreate what was (or more accurately, what they imagine used to be).

In my mind, this is not radical change, but reactionary change. Radical change, confronts the root, the very core of a thing and attempts to change *that*. And because, by definition, this change has probably never been tried before, it is a more future-looking kind of change.

Reactionary change distrusts the new and always believes that the golden age occurred in a past time, and that a community's improvement can be accomplished only by the reinstatement of the morals, institutions and standards of that past golden age.

In between reactionary and radical is the desire to keep things the same. And frequently that ground seems to be claimed by so-called "liberals," who support advances made so far, but don't want to rock the boat with more, or too radical changes.

You say that you don't "*believe democracy is radical social method*." I believe that radical, or reactionary, or no changes happen in all systems: democratic, socialist, whatever. The systems are merely the tools which a society uses to format change. Conservatives, radicals and status-quo defenders, can each use any of these systems to effect their agendas if they are able to gain the appropriate sort of power. That's why I find the stifling of campaign reform so tremendously frustrating: because I do believe that if more people in our country could be convinced that they might effectively change things with their vote, that we could in fact make radical changes.

Jae Adams

[JG] Interesting stuff about classrooms and disruptions in Madison today. The picture you presented certainly surprised me; I never experienced anything like the group therapy sessions you describe. My recollection matches the discipline procedures Scott describes from his experiences in penal institutions: the authority figure "cuts out" the

disrupter(s) from the rest of the group to isolate them from peer support or from the chance to "infect" their disruptive behavior upon others. Discipline is administered one-on-one by the powerful upon the powerless. Rebellion nipped in the bud.

I would be really curious to see the new methods in action. I wonder if when the authority figure convinces the disrupter's peers to enforce the rules, the result might be just as stifling for the individual as the older method: both methods rely on the disrupter being convinced that they have no allies and must capitulate in order to be allowed to return (or be accepted by) their peers again. Sort of a union-busting method one way or the other.

[SC] It's interesting how Jeanne has managed to cast disruptive behavior by often rude, obnoxious, poorly socialized, or selfish kids as political repression. I have been in the position of being the authority figure in these kinds of situations and I'm not so quick to sympathize with these characters. People working peacefully and productively in a group can be disrupted by individuals with their own narrow agenda. If they are obnoxious or intimidating enough, the group can lose cohesion and be powerless to deal with the disrupter. They will want and need an outside authority figure to step in and help restore balance. I don't think that has to be such a bad thing.

Of course I am far more patient with hierarchical systems than that bad girl Jeanne.

I remember reading the Joslin/Sendak book. I just don't remember what to say to the Duchess. How about, "May I join you?"

Karen Babich

[SC] I liked the Braking and Entering piece you ran. Now that I work for DOT (see below), I'm beginning to run into similarly weird stuff. The other night I had a drunk driving ticket come up where the guy had been hit with that charge plus operating while suspended, speeding and faulty equipment. All this in Cottage Grove, WI. Then I noticed his name and driver's number didn't quite match the ticket and I found another driver record with the same four violations on the same date in Madison. My leadworker and I did a little checking, finally calling the police officer. It turned out to be the same guy (he had an alias that he tried to use.) He got stopped in Cottage Grove and written up. Then he got out of the police station, got in his car and drove to Madison and got hit with the exact same four violations again.

Bill Bodden

[JG] I've already written email to you about a couple specific things you criticized about my con-

duct towards you in connection to WisCon 20. But I repeat that I absolutely did not ask anyone else to take over any part of your liaison duties. I am hoping that you will have retracted your assumption in this issue of *Turbo* that I acted in such a distrustful manner towards you. As for your complaint that you did not receive enough appreciation for your work on WisCon, I repeat that I am very sorry you feel that way. This convention has received more compliments than any other WisCon that I recall and I am sorry you feel that you were not included in the praise lavished upon the whole committee, and I am sorry if you feel that I personally did not give you the thanks you feel you deserve. I am very grateful for your work as a liaison and for your help in organizing the liaisons. I am very grateful for the mail pick-up and distribution work you did as part of your role as SF3 Corresponding Secretary. I know that the larger size and scope of this year's WisCon made this job a more difficult one than it has been in the past and I am not very happy at your suggestion that I never acknowledge it. Yours and **Tracy's** effort with Opening Ceremonies resulted in a truly entertaining event that was great fun to be a part of. I am sorry that you felt that it was not remarked upon enough to justify your work.

I am still somewhat angry to have read of these accusations and problems in a public forum, without your having made any attempt to discuss specific issues in person with me or others with whom you had complaints.

[SC] I was surprised and distressed to learn how unappreciated you (and apparently **Tracy**, too?) felt about the work you did on WisCon 20. In a year when we are frantically trying to bring new people in to work on future WisCon's, it especially damning to be alienating important and experienced volunteers such as yourself. I am sorry you feel that way. I would like to try to repair this damage if you are interested.

One point I would like to clear up regarding the damn Wrap-Up panel, I have to accept all blame for any folks attending the panel who went away feeling unappreciated. We did not get together ahead of time to talk about our plans for this panel. I thought it would be like WisCon 19 where we showed up and people asked questions, made suggestions and aired complaints that we would respond to. Instead, folks just kept talking about how great everything was. As I was sitting there, it seemed to me that we were assuming a lot of credit ourselves and not making mention of the oodles of folks who worked for us. So, completely independently of Meg and **Steve** and Jim, I thanked my staff. I went down my

staff list and mentioned everyone on my committee and what they did. This was a bad idea because **Steve** and **Meg** and **Jim** and **Jeanne** did not do this with their time, so folks on other committees were bound to be left out. I made myself look good at their expense. **Steve** was justifiably pissed at me afterwards. In retrospect, I should have focused on Ops issues and not on thanking my staff. If we were going to do that, we should have done it as one complete list at the start of the panel. Of course, you should also know that delivery of mail is an SF3 Executive Board position. Your name did not appear on any of our WisCon lists in that capacity because that job is not part of anyone's committee. It's not fair because you did a lot of WisCon related work, but you can see how everyone (including yourself!) overlooked it when we passed around email drafts of the staff list before the convention. I wouldn't make those mistakes again.

Of course what irks me about your zine is that you chose to write about all this first publicly in *Turbo* rather than bringing it to us. And the inherent implication throughout that, for some reason, we intended to snub you. After all these years you can't really know or trust us very well if you think we are capable of treating you like that.

Vijay Bowen

[JG] I sympathize with you on the life-wrecking tendencies of corporate reorganizations. We're going through one at my job, too, only here it's shortened to a 5-letter epitaph, "reorg." I've seen it all: Reorganizing a program that works in such a way that it can no longer produce good work and the experts who previously made it work are fired or decide to leave in frustration. Firing people to cut costs and calling it streamlining and then lying: saying that service will actually improve because of the cutbacks. Moving people around and telling them that all problems will be solved if they become good "team players." Yes, it's *Dilbert* world all over. I hope you manage to find something rewarding in your work this last year with SVP and that you are able to find a better job next year.

[SC] It seems astounding to me that the administration of the SVP accepted this plan from these consultants without ever getting any input (that I can see) from the rest of the staff. This is the way of things these days, I'm afraid. As **Jeanne** pointed out above, the lunatic downsize/reorg fad is not confined to the corporate world. Nonprofits and government aren't immune to this disease. Good luck weathering the storm. We missed you at WisCon. Yours was one of only four apas that I mailed out in May. Everyone else in the apa was at WisCon.



Clay Colwell

[JG] I'm so sorry to hear about Liebschhoen's death. It sounds as if you had a wonderful pet and it must hurt very much to loose her. Take care.

Bill Dyer

[SC] Wow. More work-horror stuff. I'm glad you managed to have a good time at WisCon. I really appreciated your help and your great pictures. Will you be coming back next year?

Lisa Freitag

[JG] I'm amazed and very glad that you are managing to find time for the apa in spite of the all-consuming appetite for attention that is a new baby. I hope that William has smiled at you by now and that he will move into his own bedroom soon, and give you a little space. I'm glad to have met him at WisCon 20 and to have seen you and Greg there. By the way, **Ellen Klages** is doing fine. As far as I know, her San Francisco doctor has still not confirmed the Madison diagnosis, but in any case, she's eating normally, working on her new house, and has just come back from clown school. Thanks for being there for us at WisCon!

[SC] Yes, thanks again Lisa for being our doctor-on-call. I really didn't think we would need to use you (certainly not twice!) but it was a great relief to me that you were there for us.

I loved your diary pieces *May 17, 22 and 30*. Really fine stuff. Thanks for continuing to write so openly about how life is going for you. Please don't leave us. Try not to worry about keeping current with every issue of *Turbo*. Just write when you can.

YCT me about my quotes-of-the-month, unaccredited quotes are, I am told, a fannish tradition. Lately I have been wondering if I can actually remember where I got all the quotes I've used since becoming OE. I think so. Maybe I'll publish a list of credits. Usually I pick quotes out of major media that other folks in *Turbo* may have seen. Other times I quote things *Turbo* members have said at parties or dinners that I found particularly odd, often these phrases wind up as inside jokes. In a few cases, I get away with using these quotes partly because I don't credit them. More and more members have been asking me about them, so I am thinking of relenting.

YCT **Clay** re bumper stickers. I have never seen a car sporting the amazing sticker "WARNING: In case of Rapture, this vehicle will be unoccupied." If I lived in a area where they were common, I would have to have my own bumper sticker that read something like, "WARN-

ING: In case of Rapture, this vehicle will explode in a million pieces of burning shrapnel!"

Jim Frenkel

[JG] Memories of Ursula Le Guin make up many of my best recollections of WisCon 20, too. It was quite wonderful having so much time alone with her, driving her from and to the train station in Columbus (a 45-minute trip). When I drove her back to Columbus on Monday, we sat in the depot for another half hour dissecting the convention, talking about books, and generally having a wonderful conversation. She had a great time and said that she will definitely come back to another WisCon, maybe not next year, but soon!

[SC] Do I have any great memories of Ursula, oh yeah! She gave me a big hug as Jeanne was taking her off to the train station. I haven't washed the shirt yet.

Judith Merrill was a fine guest also, but she clearly embodied the term "cantankerous" in my mind.

It was great fun seeing you and Joan at **Kim** and **Kathi's** party. I haven't sat down to talk to Joan in ages. We need to see you two more often.

Scott's New Job

[SC] Last spring WisCon 20 was practically consuming Jeanne and my personal lives. We thought and talked of little else. We made few plans, consigning most things to the Neverland of "after WisCon."

I had long ago set up my work schedule and vacation time to accommodate WisCon. I was scheduled to be off almost the entire week before the con. Not only that, but my job was particularly advantageous because I could spend a lot of time there working on WisCon. I was not interested in disturbing that arrangement at that time. The very last thing I felt I could deal with just then was a job change. Yet, as so often happens in life, a long-sought opportunity finally came along barely a month before the convention.

Some of you may not be clear on what I was doing up to this time. For the last eight years, I was a Psychiatric Care Technician (PCT) at the Mendota Mental Health Institute. For almost all that time I worked the night shift (roughly 11 pm to 7 am.) I was on a three week day-off rotation that meant that I was off on Sunday one week, Sunday and Monday the next week, Saturday, Sunday and Monday the third week. This included holidays of course. I was only off on holidays if they happened to fall on my day off (or I scheduled them off as part of my vacation planning).

Mendota Mental Health is a state institution that is located on a large park-like campus on the North end of

lake Mendota. It is a large institute with a variety of programs. There are programs for children, adolescents, various adult programs and a geriatric unit. A patient could spend a whole life out there and some have, though that is not as common as it once was. Population-wise, Mendota is much smaller than it was thirty years ago.

I worked in a very small, specialized section of the Institute. I worked exclusively in the Maximum Security Forensic Program, four wards on the west side of Goodland Hall. Our patients were all adult males who were accused or convicted of a crime, usually a felony. Normally, Resident Care Technicians who worked in all other programs of the institute had to promote to become a PCT. I was hired directly off the street as a PCT because of my test score and my long experience in Iowa Corrections.

A PCT is sort of combination guard and mental health aide. We worked very closely with patients getting them through their day. Getting them to meals, showers, activities, handling day to day matters of their property, visits, escorts and doing some counseling. We also were the front line for dealing with verbal or physical aggression. We can best be described as the guys (and women) in the white coats you always see on the psych. wards in movies. Only we didn't have to wear white coats. (They did years ago.)

Maximum Security was a dangerous place to work. I was no stranger to dangerous environments, but this place was different because the units were run in a rather wide open fashion. We were given few tools to control potentially aggressive patients. Compared with the prisons I was used to working in, this place was poorly controlled and physical assault was common and regarded casually.

The patients were often profoundly crazy or aggressive. What I found hard to initially adjust to was the randomness of the violence. Always before, I could see trouble coming, at least briefly. But here a patient could attack you at any time, completely out of the blue. We had one longtime resident for example who, every now and then, would get angry at the nurse on duty who was usually a woman. Rather than strike out at her, he would walk away (which was good) but later on he would walk up to a male PCT chosen at random and blast him—because he was angry at the nurse. We also had patients who targeted only women.

When I started working there, several of my coworkers suffered injuries severe enough to earn them various levels of disability awards (usually after long legal fights.) Ultimately nearly all of them quit or lost their state jobs. That was something I never thought was possible with a work-related injury working for the state.

I went to the night shift as soon as I could and stayed there. I looked for other state jobs and took some classes at the local community college, but I never had much luck until this spring, right before WisCon.

A position came open for transfer with the Department of Transportation. I applied in April, was scheduled for an interview in early May and got notice that I got the job on Thursday May 23, the day before WisCon began. At least I didn't have to actually start work until June 10.

My new job could hardly be more different than my old line of work. I work in an office, in a cubicle, at a desk and I have a computer. Actually I share the desk and the computer with someone on another shift, but that's OK. Really. I work in the Revocations and Suspensions Section of the Division of Driver Services. (Getting your license suspended is apparently a "driver service.") My job essentially has to do with taking the orders or tickets sent from the courts to DOT, looking up the driver's record, seeing if they are eligible to have their license suspended or revoked, "onlining the case" to their record, and generating the paperwork that gets sent to the unlucky shmoe. Sounds easy, but it actually is very complex because of the number of things you can get suspended or revoked for and the severity of the suspension depends on a blizzard of laws and changes to laws. I am in training and will be in training for six months on the first few areas of processing. My title is Motor Vehicle Representative 2. There are five levels in this job classification; I move up as I learn and master new material. It will take me several years to work up to MVR 5.

Of course it helps that the big mainframe computer programs that we do all this work on are at least 25 years old. Also it is so nice that the legislature keeps changing things (like drunk driver law and, starting this fall, you can get your license suspended for failing to pay child support.) These sorts of things provide spice in life. It drives my coworkers kind of nuts, but causes me no stress at all. I just have to ask myself if this entails listening to someone yell and pound on a locked door for eight hours? Or smell someones shit or urine they've smeared on their walls all night? Or tackle a 300 pound crazy person in the hallway with five of your coworkers at 4:00 in the morning? No? What could be so bad about this job?

The biggest advantages and disadvantages have to do with the schedule. The downside is that I work from 4 pm to 2:30 am. This means that I don't get to see Jeanne every evening, I don't go to Nick's on Wednesday night anymore and I have to miss the book discussion groups. The good part is that I work four ten-hour days. I have every Friday, Saturday and Sunday off. And holidays of course. Wow. Another disadvantage is that I have to drive to work. Hill Farms State Office Building is in the tragically-hip West side of Madison, too far to bicycle in



One of Scott's buddies at Mendota give him a reference letter:

To who so ever gives a shit:

Mr. Custoid is a damn good worker. He always shows up on time, and makes sure I'm on time also. He can put the guilt right on ya when you're a few minutes tardy. I hardly ever knew him to abuse a patient. After that unfortunate incident with the pencil in Iowa, I think he's learned his lesson. Of course we were pretty careful with him those first few years, but he hardly ever loses his temper anymore. Scott has really shown his motivation to change, in fact change and excitement are his middle names. He's as changeable as the weather, we always say. Why you should see him roll an orange. I never thought I'd see him do it, but he does. An extraordinary individual, that's our Custoid. I hope you will consider hiring Scott, even though his birthday falls on National Third Shift Workers' Day, that's no reason for him to retire here. Hell give the guy a chance! In fact, if you DON'T hire him you'll have hell to pay! You know, we know where you live! You best not mess with the Night Shift!

*Yours Truly,
Barb Norlin, BS RN*

even decent weather. There is no mass transit at 2:30 am, so I have to drive.

But I like the schedule in a lot of ways. It leaves much of my day free when I can be most productive around the house. My work environment is pretty relaxed because I'm not surrounded by stacks of managers and supervisors standing on top of one another to see what I am doing. I like my coworkers, they are mostly in training too because of the frequent turnover on this shift and my leadworkers are great. And I really, REALLY like having the long weekends and holidays. Over the Fourth of July, I had a very pleasant four days off. I can adjust to this.

I'm sleeping better than I have in years.

[JG] Scott was pretty funny the day he landed his new job. I received the initial phone call while he was out delivering art show panels to the hotel. The guy asked if he could speak to Scott and I suggested that the best time for that would be next week. "Well," he said, "It's pretty urgent, I really need to talk

to him right away. It's about that job interview he had at the DOT." I said I'd get the message to Scott as soon as possible and then I asked him if it was good news or bad news. "Good news, if he wants the job," said the man.

So I scribbled a big note to Scott telling him that he'd got the job and that he should call the DOT ASAP. Then I left the house to pick up Le Guin at the train station. The next time I saw Scott he was off-loading boxes from a moving van at the hotel. Normally, I would expect to see a pained expression or at least a stoic one on his face. But Scott was grinning ear-to-ear, looking as if the heavy job were the most enjoyable thing he could do at the moment.

When he'd gotten home and found my message, he not only called the DOT to accept the job. He'd also called Mendota and given two-weeks notice. He hadn't missed a moment.

Scott Custis & Jeanne Gomoll
July 1996