

Now that I owe everyone a letter, it must be past time for another issue of *Whimsy*. All uncredited material is mine and copyrighted © 1985 by Jeanne Gomoll. Rights revert to authors and artists on publication. Copies of *Whimsy* can be obtained with the usual and not so usual letters of comment. Are you reading this? I didn't think so... Of course the main reason people don't bother reading colophons is their minimal ego-enhancement powers. But a devious fan editor knows that this situation is easily remedied. Let me take this opportunity to tell you that I got lots of letters after the last issue of *Whimsy*, though they decreased in number to a quite disappointing and pitiful dribble after only six months or so, even though I'm still living here at 409 S. Brooks Street, Madison WI 53715 USA, and can still be reached by phone at 608-255-9909. Other than the people quoted extensively within this issue of *Whimsy*, (which happens to be #3 and Obsessive Press publication #72), I also heard from Robert Whitaker, Alexander Yudenitsch, Mike DuCharme, D. M. Sherwood, Tim Moe, Walt Willis, P. Michael Spagnolo, and Karen Trego, who attempted to blackmail your editor with an incriminating photo of me posing as a Betty Crocker clone. Harold Bob wrote as did both Avedon Carol and Lucy Huntzinger, who sent a joint postcard from London to these many months ago in which Avedon said that she loved "being in a country where it's fannish to go on protest marches". I got letters from Jim Meadows, Joan Rogers, Jeanne Mealy, Brad Foster, Irwin Hirsh, Al Sirois, Taral Wayne, Joyce Scrivner, Judith Hanna, Mog Decarnin, Paul Williams, Bill Harris, Jr., Ethel Lindsay, and Terry Carr (but not a word from Carl Brandon). Andy Porter, Joe Sokola and Carol Kennedy reviewed *Whimsy* in *SF Chronicle*, *Galactic Dispatch*, and *Rune*. More mail came in from David Stever, Robert Taylor, Phil Palmer, Sue Thomason, and Dave Rowley whose letter was thoughtfully annotated by Joy Hibbert to alert me to the sections containing mathematics ("Avoid unless feeling confident," she wrote.). The local Diane Martin noted "one small correction for *Whimsy* 3—the van is Hank's, not Dick's." Ooops. Sorry about that, Hank. I also heard from Atom, Linda Lounsbury, David Singer, Steven Bryan Bieler, Maia Cowan, Don D'Amassa, Vicki Gaydosik, Rick Gomoll, Alexis Gilliland, Mike Glicksohn, Daniel Farr, Joan Hanke-Woods, and Suzette Haden Elgin who hopes that "you don't have to move again until you're rich enough to hire people to come box it up and take it away and unbox it, while you and your friends lie about with glasses of white wine and boxes of chocolate." Me too. Both Loren MacGregor and Christine Kulyk called in letters of comment. I also heard from Christine again (in writing) and from Arthur Hlavaty, Linda Harms, Rick Sneary, John D. Owen, Adrienne Fein, and Doug Barbour who joins Ted White in correcting my use of the non-possessive apostrophes, and in general, the lots of people who had criticisms in grammar-related areas. The thing to remember about making spelling mistakes, I've learned, is don't put them in proper nouns. If you misspell somebody's name, all their friends write to you and point out your stupid error and inquire with not very subtle twists of the pen as to the level of your intelligence. Subtle Roelof Goudriaan, for instance, wrote "scientifically speaking, you are an interesting person. Very few people have the allergy to names you have. The few cases I know—who're given wide coverage on tv—only pale when hearing a name they are allergic to, like 'father-in-law'. You, upon reading a name like Joy Hibbert, break down into a torrent of typos. Hubbert, Hibbet,...poor Joy." Jean Weber, Lee Pelton, Terry Jeeves, and Debbie Notkin rushed to join the fun and with somewhat less subtlety pointed out the same double misspelling. They'd probably all be surprised to know that my spelling skills have improved since the days when the Madison SF group decided I'd never be allowed to proof-read anything. That was when they found a word—and a non-proper noun at that—spelled three different ways on the same page, all wrong. I used to be even more creative when I was young. Age dulls the imagination, I guess. In any case, thank you for pointing out the errors of my ways, folks. And Joy...I'm sorry. Really.

Terry Hughes reveals True Facts about the Olden Days and writes about the *Whimsy* IAHF column, so it seems appropriate to start things off with his letter...



Tuerry Huughes

6205 Wilson Blvd. #102  
Falls Church, VA 22044

Sub-zero weather seems to have a strange effect on women, at least it has on you. I am of course referring to your line in *Whimsy* #2 saying that "letters of comment, however, should be typed or written on stationery and refer to *Whimsy*." Picky, picky, picky. Back in the days when I was a fan we did things differently. In those golden days a mere mention of the fanzine in passing conversation was counted as a l.o.c. and assured the mentioner of the next three or four issues before he/she would next have to mumble the fanzine's name. Why we used to count it when someone just said "I got your fanzine." That was damned high praise in those days. But that's not good enough for you young turks, no. You have to have your letters of comment all written out on stationery. Next you'll be insisting on relevant comments. You are becoming damned picky, my dear.

That was at the beginning of your fanzine and then at the end I had to deal with the fact that you didn't list me in the "I Also Heard From's". No doubt you will use that same sort of logic to say that you didn't IAHF me because I didn't send you a letter of comment or even a letter of non-comment. It's enough to make me shake my head. Don't you know that in the old days the editors of personalzines would just randomly list people from their mailing list (or off it for that matter) in the IAHFs so that everyone would get his/her turn? Back then letterhacks would get paid for each letter actually printed. Admittedly it wasn't much, no more than 4¢ a word, but the faneds generally threw in some bonus money if we included our own punchlines with the letters. But that's not the way you want to do it. You are determined to throw tradition out the window and become

what is known as a fannish stickler. If you must do it your own way, you should at least begin a new section called I Should Have Heard From (or ISHMF) for those of us who were not able to write due to major surgery, kidnapping or just regular napping. That way we wouldn't feel left out.

This all kind of makes me glad I didn't get around to mailing you my letter of comment on *Whimsy* #1 if that's your attitude. Besides sending letters to you is not the safest thing in the world. One need only look at your most recent issue to see what you did to poor Alexis "Guilliland" to know that I could have become Tuerrey Hughes" or even John Berry. Speaking of John Berry, I find it just the slightest bit difficult to believe that he really began a letter to you with "Incidentally, why did you..." I certainly have never received a letter that went: "Dear Terry, Incidentally you fly is...." On top of this on your first page you quote John Berry as predicting that you will be inundated with letters of comment but there was no such section in his actual printed letter. How many John Berry's on your mailing list live in Seattle? Or was this just an exercise of editorial control on your part to make him look foolish by beginning his letters with "Incidentally" and forgetting to tell you that letters would fill up your mailbox? I'll have you know, Jeanne, that John Berry is perfectly capable of making himself look foolish without any help from you. If that's what you do to a nice guy like John, who does fanzines and everything, what would you have done to a letter from an old has-been like me? My letter was filled to the margins with wit, amusing personal attacks on people you don't like and fresh punchlines (as opposed to the time-tested ones most of your readers seem to use). That letter of mine was so good and so funny—far more amusing than anything that those turkeys whose letters you did quote said—that I almost wish I would have actually written it despite how you might have edited it.

\*\*\*\*\*

The rest of Terry's letter was really funny and much more interesting, but I've got to keep this fanzine down to manageable size, so I couldn't just let him go on and on forever, and anyway he says he'd get mad if I cut out the first bits of his letter (letting him seem to start out in mid-thought with "Incidentally..."). So let that be a lesson to you Terry—you'd better start putting the good stuff right at the beginnings of your letters from now on.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 1: Cover Girl Make-Up

Christine Kulyk telephoned in a letter of comment sometime last year and said (with the voice of a clerk at a fashionable women's clothing store) that the gunslinger costume on the cover of *Whimsy* was "me". And Sue Thomason comments, "if that cowperson on the cover is you, I must say that you look very much like some pictures of Oscar Wilde... is this significant?" Probably. In a funny part of his letter, Terry Hughes thought he remembered that costume as being what I wore at Constellation. Other letter-writers thought that the person on the cover of *Whimsy* 2 was supposed to be David Langford, or, if they recognized me through the disguise, that it represented an angry put-down of Langford. This is all getting to be very confusing. Fandom has enough misunderstandings, feuds and burgeoning arguments without this. So: what happened, you see, was that I was working at the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) exhibit at the Wisconsin State Fair last summer and during one of my breaks I wandered around the exhibit buildings and checked out the fair. Most of it is pretty boring unless you actually like getting sick and risking death on rickety old roller-coasters, or ruining your tennies while you walk through the barns and see farm animals. Some of the buildings are really just mundane huckster rooms though, and there's some reasonably fun, kitschy stuff to inspect. Like the Victorian photo opportunity booths. They provide costumes (and one size actually does fit all because all the costumes come with elastic straps in the back, which is OK since they only photograph your front side) and you dress up like a high- or low-class hooker or floozie, or a hard-working prairie wife, or a gunslinger, or a gambler, or a

sheriff or a cowboy, or whatever tickles your fancy. Then they take your picture with an old-type camera and the photo turns out looking like a daguerreotype print. After the second day at the fair, I'd run out of places to explore and I decided to have my picture taken by "The Victorian Photographer" (alias, Ralph Berlovitz of Minneapolis), and I walked into his booth to examine the costumes. First of all, I decided that I didn't want to dress up as a floozie or a solid prairie wife.

"So, what do you want to be?" asked Ralph.

"A gunslinger," I said.

"Great," Ralph said, grinning. "I like drag shots."

So he gave me the Wyatt Earp outfit with the vest and long jacket, a six-shooter, a rifle, a cigar, wire-rimmed glasses to replace my plastic aviator ones, a black leather hat, and a powder barrel on which to rest my rifle. I tried to look as if I knew how to maintain a poker face and was prepared to shoot down anyone who doubted it, and that's when Ralph snapped the picture.

And that's the True Story of the cover of *Whimsy* 2. That gunslinger was me. And I'm really not angry at David Langford.

\*\*\*\*\*

Cy Chauvin  
14248 Wilfred  
Detroit, MI 48213

Dave Langford comments on your cover, but I think what's more remarkable is the change in the titles of your fanzines. Your WAPazine [A Women's Apazine] was titled *Obsessions*; this one is called *Whimsy*. Now this seems to indicate a total change in attitude towards fanzines (even if published by "Obsessive Press"). Be careful, Jeanne; if you let this obsessive whimsey take you too far, you may be drummed out of fandom.

\*\*\*\*\*

Threats, now I get threats!

I'm just growing out of my earnest-young-fan stage, Cy.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 2: Houses, Home Life and Moving On

My story about moving in the last issue elicited lots of letters from you about your moving experiences, so many in fact, that it seems to me that I might have tapped into the essence of fannish experience. On consideration, that's not surprising. I've been in charge of the mailing list for the Madison SF group for many years now, and if there's one thing that fans have in common (even more, perhaps, than a knowledge of SF) is an intimate acquaintance with the experiences of moving. I bet that you could start a conversation with any group of fans at any convention and, once the topic was broached, you could elicit one or more long tales of horror from any of them. It's almost like going to New York City and talking about How You Got There.

(A digression...) I was in New York City last winter and soon noticed that everyone who lives there has a fixation on how they get anywhere from anywhere, and will want to tell their story right after they get there. Like you walk into a party and the host comes up to welcome you, takes your coat, gives you a refreshment, and where in the Midwest you'd be asked how have you been and what do you think about this weather, huh?—in New York City the host immediately asks how you got there. If any host asked that here in Madison, they'd get a blank look and a slow glance down at the guest's feet, and maybe a question or two: "How did you get here? What's in the drink?" But in New York City, the question is taken perfectly seriously and will trigger an eager recitation of the names of a string of subway and bus stations along with notations of how long the wait was for each connection and a description of any unusual violence or machinery breakdowns witnessed along the way. The object of the game seems to be to discover a route that the listener has never used or considered before in making the same trip. Extra points are scored when the route actually saves any amount of time or avoids time spent in more dangerous areas of the city. New Yorkers spend a good portion of their lives getting from one place to another, planning how they are going to get from one



place to another, and afterward, telling each other how they did it. Midwesterners, on the other hand, spend a great deal of time surviving various kinds of weather, planning how to survive the next season, and on giving each other advice on how their neighbors can best survive it. But that's another story.

Fans, now, spend a great deal of their lives moving, planning to move, and telling stories about the last time they moved, and vowing never to move again.

Ted White wrote about one of his moving experiences, which in New York City takes on some of the characteristics of a Getting There story. (He also asked what oakum was. You don't want to know what oakum is, Ted. Believe me.)

\*\*\*

Ted White  
1014 N. Tuckahoe St.  
Falls Church, VA 22046

When I was hired by *Heavy Metal* in 1979 I had about three weeks in which to find a place to stay during weeknights. I thought it would be easy. Since I planned to keep a minimum of possessions in NYC—commuting down to Virginia every Friday night and back again every Monday morning—beyond fresh clothing, I figured I could get by with a room in someone else's apartment. "Something cheap," was the way I thought of it.

I was wrong. I answered ads for roommates. I wasted money on a referral service. (One woman the service had listed to me told me "I don't know why they gave you my number. I told them no men.") I was shown pull-out couches in tiny livingrooms, directly between my putative roommate's bedroom and the bathroom, the kitchen, or both. And worst of all, the rents on these inadequate quarters were not cheap. They averaged between \$250 and \$400 a month! But at that time Manhattan had an apartment vacancy-rate of less than 1%, which really put the squeeze on rents. I ended up sharing Brad Balfour's apartment, a dreadful place with dreadful roommates (of whom Brad was by far the easiest to get along with). My room had one window—on the airshaft. Even in the coldest of the winter that room, a triangular wedge with a big radiator, got stiflingly hot unless I kept the window open. A floor or two down somebody else had the same problem, but they also liked to watch TV all night with the volume turned up. I could hear every word Johnny Carson said, as clearly as if the TV was in my room. What a choice!

By sheer luck, a friend of a friend passed on the news that a friend of his was looking for someone to take over the sublet of a one-room studio apt. It was on East 79th St., and was only \$270 a month. I snapped it up. It was great. I fixed it up and loved it for five months. Then the real landlord, who was cracking down on the illegal sublets in his building, followed me up to my door one night and informed me that I didn't belong there and I was illegal and I'd better get out. I gave him some jive about waiting for the woman who was the legal tenant, and how I wasn't "really" living there myself. He didn't believe me for a minute.

Right after he left I called my landlord, a married couple who lived in the next building and had kept her pre-marriage apt, subletting it out to people like me. They acted like I'd gone and done something terrible: "You let him see you going in!" For the next several weeks I returned "home" each evening wondering if I'd find the locks changed. I went to a St. Louis Archon and came back with the same fear. I toured Astoria with Susan Palermo, looking for apartments. (Astoria is a very close—a couple of stops—by subway to the area in Manhattan where my office was.) It was depressing.

I was one day away from signing an agreement on an apartment in Astoria when the publisher of *Heavy Metal* called me into his office and fired me.

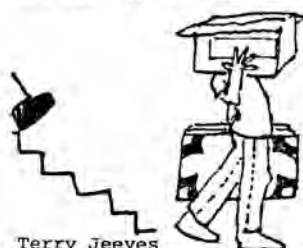
All in all it worked out fine. At least I hadn't put down hundreds of dollars on that apt in Queens.

\*\*\*

Joseph Nicholas  
22 Denbigh Street  
Pimlico  
London SW1V 2ER  
England

I really wanted to write in response to your house-moving story, since it reminded me so much of our own—although we had the advantage over you in that we didn't have to do it all in one day. Because we had to give one month's notice before moving out of our previous home (a bedsit in St. George's Square, just down the road from here, which until Judith arrived in March 1982 had been inhabited by me alone), we could therefore spend the entire month shipping

everything up to 22 Denbigh Street (during which month we were of course paying two lots of rent, but that on the former home was more than repaid by the return of the deposit I had to lay out as security for the furnishings when I first moved into it.) Mind you, I shouldn't say "we" with respect to our house-moving, since as it turned out I had to do almost all of it, Judith spending most of the month (this was July 1982) touring around the UK with a visiting friend from Perth (which means that she's now seen more of this bloody country than I, curse curse). So one fine and sunny Saturday, as that summer's Pimlico Festival caroused away in the "Square" part of St George's Square, I shouldered the first box of books and set off up the road with a spring in my step and a merry smile on my lips...and by the time I arrived the spring and the smile had gone completely, and my shoulder was beginning to feel a little raw. Well, hell, I thought, let's keep at it, let's get it over with, for am I not saving a small fortune in moving fees? (Besides, I can't drive, so hiring a van and doing it that way was right out of the question.) And by the end of the day I was so knackered that it was as much as I could do to crawl into bed and fall asleep...to awake the next morning with aches in places where I never knew I had muscles. But Sunday I spent in the same manner, and the evenings of the following week, moving a few of our possessions at a time and getting them all properly sorted out as I went along so that we wouldn't be faced with one vast pile of stuff that would overwhelm our efforts to tidy it up, taking a few evenings off here and there when I felt I needed a rest or wanted to write a few letters or do other fanac-type things...and I was still engaged in moving, although with thankfully very little left to do, when Judith returned from her tour. So we loaded what remained into the hired car she'd been using and completed the move that way. And if and when we ever have to move again you can bet I won't be repeating my performance. God in Heaven, but I never knew we had so much stuff! Or that it weighed so damn much...but then this is the way with books and magazines, or indeed any paper matter at all: what looks like a small, compact, easily maneuverable box is in fact such a bugger to lift and carry that it has to be unpacked and its contents conveyed to their destination a bit at a time. (Which is no doubt why the whole moving operation took so long to complete.) This is one of the main reasons why I've since "rationalized" my book and fanzine collections—never mind that this flat is bigger than the bedsit, I don't want the burden of all that paper to cope with in the future (particularly as, life being what it is, we're continually acquiring more paper, of one sort or another, with every passing day). Indeed, the fact that this flat is bigger than the bedsit will make any future house-moving problems even more nightmarish since, as you probably know from your own experience, one's possessions expand to fill the space available. I know, in a distant, abstract sort of way, that (barring a few acquisitions, like a bean bag, and some extra shelves to replace those that went with the bedsit) everything fitted into the old bedsit, but I'm damned if I can now visualise how...



Terry Jeeves  
230 Bannerdale Rd.  
Sheffield S11 9FE  
England



I've done it [moving] a few times over the years...and each time have paid professionals (hollow laugh) to do it for me. I still remember one occasion...the chap who came to estimate

quantity of material and cost said airily..."Oh the men will bring boxes and pack everything." Like suckers, we believed him...and were sitting peacefully in the kitchen brewing up the endless cups of tea which is the only way of ensuring the British workman even remotely resembles a workman...when gentle tinkles of crockery from the drawing room reached our ears. Brainless stupid misbegotten idiots of removal men had actually manhandled the sideboard across the room and were in the process of up-ending it to get it through the door...WITH ALL OUR CROCKERY STILL INSIDE IT waiting for them to do their packing bit. Another time, having loaded their van, the wights vanished over

lunch time...for two hours...taking with them our tea kettle so that WE couldn't brew up. Those were the clods who managed to lose a carton of paperbacks including six early editions of MAD Comic. Next time I want moving I'll buy Ex-Lax.

\* \* \* \*

Well, Peter and I have been living at 409 S. Brooks Street for about a year and a half now, and like the memories of labor pains, the memories of our move here have faded and the story, in fact, has become one of my favorite funny anecdotes. We got settled pretty quickly; as far as I'm concerned, the unpacking part, the getting organized part, is the fun part of moving. So all those of you who asked those sarcastic questions about whether or not we were unpacked yet: yes, as a matter of fact I got unpacked and got everything put away in the first two weeks of living here. If you had asked Peter that question—in fact, if you ask Peter that question now—you'd get more satisfaction for your sadistic thoughts.

Once, several months after we'd moved into this place, my mom visited for the first time and it was a measure of both the appearance of Peter's office with all its many still unpacked boxes, and in small part, of my mother's feelings about Peter's and my living arrangement, that her first reaction was a question: "Is he staying?" In the later, funnier parts of his letter, Terry Hughes asked what part of the house Peter has. "Perhaps his office is down in the dark, damp, chilly basement along with his workshop, far from sunlight, warmth, music and letters of comment. Doesn't he deserve some space in the fanzine too?" Well, Terry, if you will check out the first floor map on page 7 of *Whimsy* 2 again, you will find the room labeled "PETER'S OFFICE", but in fact you're partially correct in that he also has space in the dark, damp, chilly basement. And both of those places, his warm office on the first floor and his chilly wood-working shop downstairs, are entirely his domain. In fact that's our deal; he gets his kind of organization there, and I get my kind of organization in the rest of the house. I also have to promise to refer to his rooms' conditions as having a kind of "organization". When two people live together many compromises are necessary. In this case, the compromise has been to accommodate my pickier needs for neatness and Peter's rights to his own specially "organized" retreats.

It's been an interesting experiment for both Peter and I to live together, being, as we are, such very different kinds of people. The neatness fixation vs "organization" has been the easiest difference to overcome. Another amusing difference has stemmed from the fact that I am innumerate (to borrow Alexis Gilliland's found label) and that Peter is working on his Ph.D dissertation in math at the University of Wisconsin. The dissertation will cover some algebraic subject in an area called "group theory", and that's all I'm prepared to tell you here. No letters of comment attempting to explain this topic to me will be printed; in fact, I won't even promise you that I'll even make a serious attempt to read any such letter all the way through, so stop right there if you think you've found a good comment hook. Peter attempts to explain quite often, and actually he's a rather good explainer because he comes up with analogies that are particularly apt for the explainee. Usually, he'll try to explain things to me using graphics, or map-making examples (areas with which I'm very familiar). Unfortunately, after these explanation sessions, I usually emerge contemplating the map or the graphics problem, or if Peter's lucky, my admiration at his skill with analogies.

I've met some fascinating people through Peter though, that I probably wouldn't have met had it not been for Peter's special interests. There is a couple, for example, who used to share an office with Peter in the math department, and for whom Peter stood up when they married, that I've gotten to particularly like. Darrah and Peggy Chaveh gave ballroom and square dancing lessons at their wedding rehearsal because that's one of their hobbies. And when someone asks Darrah which floors in the mathematics building have the restrooms, Darrah is likely to answer, "on the floors congruent to 2 mod 3." I had to write that down in my notes and to ask particularly (as they all laughed over the joke on retelling) that they not try to explain it to me. In this area of difference between Peter and I, the main sort of com-

promise has been listening on my part and then patience on his when I subtly redirect the conversation. At one of our first parties I found that I'd been listening and not understanding a word for quite a while during a conversation among Peter and a number of his math department buddies. I sort of straightened up in my chair from the slump I'd sunk into, smiled brightly at the person to my left, and said, "You know, ever since I've moved in with Peter, I've got to listen to some really different conversations!" ...At which point everyone laughed at my now sour expression and changed the subject to the similarities and differences between SF conventions and Dance conventions. Actually that was a really interesting conversation, and someday maybe I can convince Darrah and Peggy to write it up for some fanzine or another.

Peter and I have other differences (though infrequent arguments) in such areas as politics and religion, and it often amazes me (and I'm sure, many of our friends too) that we get along as well as we do. I won't go into the substance of those political and religious differences, though, as I think I may already have gone further in writing about Peter than Peter might feel comfortable reading. But I have felt committed to writing something about him. Peter, along with several members of the Madison SF group was very intrigued with those first two *Whimsys*, realizing that the tendencies of my first-person writing might eventually catch them in the spotlight of some anecdote or another. For weeks after an issue came out, Peter or other group members would hint about their desires to be written about, but then, just as frequently, during some conversation or meeting or amusing situation that quite obviously could be retold in some whimsically anecdotal context, they would warn me in a worried aside, "Don't write about this though, OK?" Frequently I would hear this admonition after a WisCon planning meeting. Spike is still not sure that she likes being made into a *Whimsy* character. I don't know how my sister Julie will react to the story about her in this issue. Once, Carrie Root stopped in the middle of what she was doing (but I've promised not to say what exactly she was doing), cast a worried look over at me, and said, "you know, it sort of casts a dampening effect on things, knowing that anything you say or do might eventually find itself in print in the next *Whimsy*."

So you see, I'm still struggling as I write, with the problem of how much of my life (and the lives of those around me) to report here in *Whimsy*. But I got lots of opinions from you on this subject—far more than I can reprint here.

\* \* \* \*

Eric Mayer

1771 Ridge Rd. East  
Rochester, NY 14622

You will probably find that your biggest problem in writing *Whimsy* is deciding how much to reveal, and what, and in what manner. I got a fanzine

the other day from Hans Jurgen Mader in West Germany, who refers to these sorts of fanzines, not as personalzines but as egozines. I think egozine is a much better term actually—sounds more fannish and is more accurate. It is a kind of egotrip to publish a magazine about oneself. (Certainly no one else is going to publish one about us.) There is a tendency, I think, because it's an egozine to want to tell all. I don't myself, although I may give the impression that I do. When I lived in Brooklyn there was a problem Kathy and I had with one of our neighbors. I wrote about it at some length—on the theory that this was what was going on in my life so to be honest with my readers I had to—. I rather regret it now, because it was unpleasant and unenlightening. Since then I've tried to play up more positive things for the most part, though some readers seem to prefer the other. Anyway I do edit my experience, more, say, than Linda Blanchard. But it's also a matter of how good a writer you are. If you write well enough, if you can communicate well enough and universalize your experiences you have a better chance of writing about very personal things without making a fool of yourself. I think *Egoboodle* (and its progeny) are among the best things published in fandom today, but I doubt I myself could get away writing about some of the subjects Linda so skillfully writes about.

\* \* \* \*



Harry Warner, Jr.  
423 Summit Ave.  
Hagerstown, MD 21740

I've never been very communicative in fanzines about my most intimate experiences, partly due to the dangers that you point out in this *Whimsy*. For those who are brave enough to communicate to all fandom their amours and other crises, I have admiration. The trouble is, almost anything that appears in a fanzine has the capability of causing trouble much later. An extreme example occurred a few years back when a now mostly inactive fan got embroiled in a lawsuit over mundane matters. The attorney for the other side somehow came across an old fanzine in which someone had described her as sick in terms that seemed to refer to her intellectual health. He seized upon this as part of his case, taking it as evidence that she hadn't been in a condition to do certain things which had created the lawsuit. She was able to prove that her problem at that time had been a serious physical illness but that careless paragraph in a fanzine caused her a great deal of extra trouble. I almost got myself beaten up about a dozen years ago because a mundane who had been having an affair with the sister of a fan came across a fanzine in which I had a loc and thought the loc contained snide references to his romantic life. He telephoned me to be sure to be at home at a certain time that day because he was driving to Hagerstown to give me a thrashing, from which I was spared when I convinced him that he had a faulty knowledge of fannish slang. He had thought my reference to fanac in the loc was fannish slang for sexual intercourse.



Of course, chronicling one's love life can have unexpected consequences in mundane publications, too. The most famous example must be Goethe's *Werther*, a thinly disguised retelling of a youthful love affair. He made the story more dramatic by causing the hero to commit suicide from disappointment, something he hadn't done, and the story became so wildly popular that it was blamed for scads of suicides all over Europe by disappointed young lovers. That story was still having consequences of other types as late as the 20th century, when Thomas Mann wrote a fine novel, *Lotte in Weimar*,

whose protagonist was the woman who had been Goethe's girl, visiting his home town late in life. I hope your narrative of moving day doesn't create a contemporary parallel of *Werther*. If I hear about fans here and there committing suicide on the eve of the day they were supposed to move to a new place of residence, I'll blame you for frightening them to death by all the misadventures you encountered.

\*\*\*\*\*

Jean Weber  
PO Box 42  
Lyneham ACT  
Australia 2602

"Is this likely to embarrass me—or someone else—a few years from now?" strikes me as an excellent criterion for a decision on whether to publish or not, especially if one is young (and thus faced with a lot of years in which one's early scribbles may come back to haunt one). I'm often quite happy to blather away about myself and my ideas, but I'm very careful not to mention anyone else by name (except in the most innocuous contexts) unless I've cleared it with him or her first.

\*\*\*\*\*

Marc Ortlieb  
GPO Box 2708X  
Melbourne, Victoria 3001  
Australia

...I know exactly how much of my person I'm willing to reveal in my writing. This doesn't seem to change, and I don't at all regret that I wrote about my previous relationship—with Linda Smith—in assorted fanzines and apazines. She's now married, and I've moved to Melbourne to be with Catherine, but that previous part of

my life still exists in print, and I'm glad that it does. I tend to treat fanzines as a diary substitute at times, as I'm not a great diary keeper, and so I can go back to them and find out things about me which I would have otherwise forgotten. I think that, unless one's self-perception is very shaky, one can survive seeing old fanzine material being brought to light. It can even be amusing...I suppose I'm not quite so sensitive about relationships being discussed because I can think of little that I would say in print about a relationship that I wouldn't say to the other person in the relationship, whether the relationship were extant or defunct...

\*\*\*\*\*

Debbie Notkin  
680 66th Street  
Oakland, CA 94609

Glad to see people discussing the Miss Manners stuff about privacy and self-revelation. Don't worry, you tell a fine story. I was real uncomfortable about the stuff in *Egoboodle* about Linda and rich, but for different reasons than yours. Despite my admiration for Miss Manners, I'm a great believer in necking in public—you're happy, and you want to show it off, and why not? And despite Miss Manners' dire warnings, it's been my experience that ten years later you can still be holding hands across a restaurant table and making excuses to touch each other. What bothers me about revealing love experiences in print is that it opens people (in this case, Linda) so much to, "I told you so" and/or "What happened next?" The urge to second-guess other people's lives and relationships is a strong one in a lot of people, and the more you tell the world about how you found each other, the more the world will feel it has a right to follow the course of your relationship—and if you do break up, are you going to want to write those details up in the same cheerful, mildly euphemistic style? I couldn't help inserting my own doubts about worldcon romances into my reading of *Egoboodle*, although I didn't mention them to Linda when I wrote a LoC, and I'm sure I'm not the only one. If you neck in public and then break up, the same public is likely to see you not necking and draw their own conclusions, but if you tell tales out of bed, your listeners may want tales you don't have as much fun telling. And yes, everyone has their own boundaries of privacy—and I know I've learned a lot about mine by overstepping them.

\*\*\*\*\*

Time has passed since my tentative expressions of discomfort with making very personal revelations in print. And time has passed since these letter-writers wrote their reactions to Linda Blanchard's *Egoboodle* revelations. And in all that time lots of things have changed for Linda and lots of things have changed for me. Linda moved to the Falls Church area to live with rich and then she moved away; things didn't work out for them. As it turns out, things aren't going to work out for Peter and I either, at least for the long haul: we won't be renewing our lease together at the end of the summer. And now, in retrospect, I feel more sure than ever that keeping a low profile in print is best for me. Answering Debbie's question: no, I definitely would not want to have to confine the "Peter and Jeanne Story" here in some cheerful, mildly euphemistic style. But as many of you pointed out in your letters, we all have different styles. I think Linda deserves the final word on this matter. Now Linda may have changed her mind about some of the things she wrote in the following LoC, but I suspect she won't have changed it much. Keep in mind, though, that this letter was dated January 1984.

\*\*\*\*\*

Linda Blanchard  
c/o Weatherlow  
21339 Willow Lane  
Strongsville, OH 44136

From what little I've seen of her opinions, I like Miss Manners. I generally agree with her, but on the subject of public display of affection (in her context, on people's couches, or in yours, in print) I have to argue. Relationships are not fixed objects—they're entities that are born, grow, and die—they live. It seems to me awfully

silly to feel embarrassed that a relationship changes. So you start out passionate, unable to satisfy your craving for another's company, and in time the passion slows, the craving mellows and you're better able to keep up with your appetites. The growth, the change is a good and natural thing (you'd exhaust yourselves otherwise, and have no time for anything else but each other, become narrow, constricted) and to be expected. If people snicker because a relationship in its course slows down—if they count it then as dead, or even merely devalued—then that's their problem; let them laugh, and enjoy their joke. I know the truth (and I'll probably tell anyone who cares to listen): I am happy, and they're laughing at a fiction of their own creation if they think something died when it merely changed.

The other case was the death of a relationship: How embarrassing to have loved someone once and to stop loving them or have them stop loving you! That's a horrible way to feel! The Event is painful enough! Do we have to add to that pain being ashamed that things didn't work? Listen! It's a confusing world, people are intricate & different. You can think of each relationship between individuals as a new life form and a hell of a lot of them are just not viable. Fortunately just because the death-rate is high we don't just give up trying. Because a relationship failed does not necessarily mean You Are A Failure. If you stop loving someone it doesn't make you a bad person, or a fool. If someone ceases to love you—or never did—that doesn't make you less worthy. It happens. If people want to laugh, laugh meanly, spitefully at your expense—well who cares about the opinions of those people anyway? Let them laugh at their own bitter jokes!

Alright, there are occasions when we make fools of ourselves. It seems to be human nature to get our hopes up high, to develop impossible expectations—and if we flaunt them in front of the world, then yes, we're foolish. But again if people laugh, well, if they've never been foolish before themselves, if they've never believed in something that wasn't true, then they've a right to laugh; but I don't think there are many of the "Genuine First Stone Throwers" alive. Most everyone has done it one time or another, and if someone who's done it, too, laughs, well it may be the kind of chuckle one laughs with—and in so doing both recognize their human frailty, and perhaps build up a little insulation against the pain (it is often better to laugh than cry); or it may be the hurting kind of laugh of one who's been there, in which case again, I don't put much stock in that sort of person's opinions.

The worst thing is perhaps to speak in the heat of anger. There lies the potential for many other typically human errors, like misjudging the situation, or reacting defensively, errors that could cause someone else besides the erring human pain.

So let's not just Not Talk About It for fear of being laughed at. You don't really want to cut off a whole area of communication about life, an area not often talked about in an open forum. Don't deny yourself the therapy of writing about something that concerns you, concerns us all, quite a bit. Human relationships are difficult, and confusing, and the only way we'll understand them is by talking to others who feel differently, and the same, about things. Some judgement is in order, though, some reserve (but that's true of all fan editing—as you point out, you don't want to bore your audience with every little thing; you must choose what has interest, and be careful to think through what you write down, with an eye to the durability of print, and the feelings of others) without which consideration we'd be foolish indeed.

When I wrote about rich & myself, our meeting, our budding romance; I wrote knowing it was "against the rules" and even agreeing that writing glowing reports about anything—new lovers, new jobs, new video games—was risky. But I did consider what I was saying before I put it in print. The messages I intended to get across were many, but the highlights were: that I love him, an awful lot as you can tell by my committing to marry him; that the whole thing was a whirlwind, and fun; that it made me dizzy and, yes, full of passion for someone I consider a very good man.

It could be that rich and I will never marry—we could split next month for all I know (but I think it quite unlikely, since at this point we don't even see each other but once every two months!)—or we could marry and then divorce.

Looking back on what I wrote in Seeing\*Stars I don't think I'll be embarrassed, for it will all be true. Even if rich turns out to be an ogre overnight he will still have been worthy of my love and commitment on the day I gave it. He is certainly not an ogre in disguise now as his many long-time friends can testify, so if I am being fooled now into believing I can live with the man, I don't think I'm impossibly, incomprehensibly foolish.

Sure, there'll be a time when I don't have to be close to him 'most every minute we're together, but don't a-one of you think my passion for my old man's diminished then; it'll merely have gone. . . undercover, so to speak, to where I think is the proper location for physical relations between couples who have the time for it—in privacy. But now, if you see rich and I together, close together, you have my permission to laugh, broadly, but only with the kind of warmth that knows what healthy lust is! I mean c'mon! we only see each other once every two months!

Honestly, though, I left quite a lot out of the account; a lot that went on between us, and that was important. I only briefly touched my doubts and nervousness, and the glowing heady highs. They were important to the tale, but a thorough analysis wasn't necessary, nor would it have been politic. Ditto the ongoing romance: particularly as we get to know each other better, the details are more appropriately kept between us now. Later, maybe ten years from now, I might write about one of the most amazing periods in my life, about all the feelings and changes ripping through, but at the moment I'm too much in its thrall to deal with it publicly in print (I will make notes in private).

But please don't think I'm not nervous about talking about myself in print; I am. If you'd been around me long enough, in person, you'd know I'm really quite shy, almost in contradiction to my wide-open print personality. Talking about what I feel, about the mistakes I've made and so on makes me a little uncomfortable, but so far I've found the returns on the investment (in the form of dialog) is quite worth the effort.

\* \* \* \*

And so now Linda has moved on. The address listed with this LoC is the most recent I have for her, but it may not be her current current address; her plans were in flux, the last I heard. I hope she doesn't give up on writing for fanzines or on editing Egogoodle, though.

And I'll be moving on, too. My address will remain a Madison address and I'll be letting you know sometime later this summer and might have a new, thrilling moving story for you. I hope you're as excited about the prospect as I am.

\* \* \* \*







Spike, presidential candidate Sonya Johnson, and me

we've been merely classified and ignored on the basis of one identifying trait. For instance, Spike is a librarian at the DNR and forever battles the stereotyping tendencies of that category. The expectations, for some, are that she be prim, conservative and bookish. Perhaps that's why she's asked me (as a DNR artist) to design library information brochure with a theme of "Conan the Librarian". That should shake up some of those assumptions!

### Chapter 3: Spike: The Myth and the Name

Remember Spike from the last issue? Steve Stiles still isn't completely sure which one of us is which.

Steve Stiles Dear Jeanne, Spike was the one  
3003 Ellerslie Ave. on the left, right? Yours, Steve  
Baltimore, MD 21218 Stiles.

Right.

Jeanne Bowman I love the photos in the ish—  
PO Box 982 especially Spike's\*. But does she  
Glen Ellen, CA 95442 really want to tell about the black  
nightie for the rest of her life??

Or is that a secret code? "Aha, a new pigeon, wants black nightie, eh? That means outrageous story time, heh, heh, heh, wanna buy some silk drawers? He he he."

You're right too.

Well there was a black nightie story, but the truth has by now been long surpassed by the usefulness of the phrase as an apocryphal reference. Spike thinks it would be better to change the subject. So, I thought I'd talk about how Spike Got Her Name. Talk about apocryphal references... Everyone asks what it means and never really gets a straight answer from Spike. So she proposes that we have a contest to explain her name, and she will choose the winner (based either on the closest approximation to the truth, or on entertainment value, or both). She assures me that there will be prizes.

The first entry has already been received... (from John Bartelt, 1333 Woodland Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025):

To find the origin of Spike's distinctive nickname, we should start back when she was in junior high school. Because she looked older than she actually was, she could often get away with buying liquor, despite being well under age. Thus she was almost always the one to supply the alcohol to the teen-aged parties in those days. Many were the times that the soiree in someone's basement (while the parents were away) didn't really get going until she arrived with the pint of rum for the punch. She got such a reputation for supplying alcohol that her friends started calling her "Boozer".

Of course, in senior high she was one of the stars of the volleyball team. She was so good at pounding the ball into the opponent's court that she was known as "The Killer".

When in college, she got so into the habit of wearing high, narrow heels all the time, even when not in fashion, she was just called "Weird".

But it was after her sex-change operation that she obtained her current moniker. It happened because she had her former penis bronzed and wore it as a pendant. Friends would say "Here comes Weird Pat and The Spike." Soon she was referred to herself as "The Spike". When she stopped wearing her anatomical ornament, she also dropped the definite article, and became simply "Spike". And that's the story.

Obviously, you will stand a better chance in this contest if you meet Spike before entering your theory, but we'll accept fiction too. And just as obviously, a large part of this so-called contest is a joke. But a little bit of it, I think, is very serious.

Spike and I have often talked about the images various people hold about us and how these expectations affect us. Sometimes the expectations are simplistic—the result is, at worst, bigotry, or at best, we know that



Sometimes the expectations are based on more than simplification of one known trait, though. Spike and I have marveled at how we are sometimes known as different people by various "special interest groups" in our lives, such as our families. Somewhere in our youth, the reality and our parents' image of what we should be, separated and began living independent lives. Going home is sometimes like a bizarre episode of *Twilight Zone* in which we discover we've never been who we thought we were.

I think Spike is sensitive to the expectations of others and more than most people, she refuses to temporarily camouflage her real self for the convenience of those who would prefer their simpler, self-made images of her. So she constantly surprises, constantly attempts to tickle those around her into dropping their assumptions and see her new.

So how do you think Spike got her name?



Photo by John Bartelt

\* John Bartelt should have been credited for that photograph last time. Sorry, John.

## Chapter 4: An Update on the Life of an Innumerate

I closed out 1984's books true to my resolution to keep careful records of all financial transactions. I got behind on checkbook-balancing now and then, but actually balanced my checkbook to the penny several times. (This is not a sarcastic comment; I'm really quite proud of that accomplishment.) And I don't have a care in the world, now, as I contemplate putting together my tax forms.

You see, I've got to declare myself a business with my 1984 tax returns and so have to explain to the government how come I'm deducting expenses for almost half of our house as office expenses. (My office takes up almost half of the living space.) That includes rent, heat, electricity and phone bills. No, I'm not worried at all about figuring out the correct procedure for reporting this stuff.

There are copies of my bills to Bob Fay who is a consulting archaeologist for agencies dependant on federal funds. These agencies have to do environmental impact statements before they start bulldozing, and environmental impact includes archaeological resources. I did graphics for his reports. Jenny Armstrong is responsible for a portion of my free lance income last year too, because she ran as a Democratic candidate for congress and I did her billboards, yard signs, bus signs, newspaper ads, several brochures and handouts, and stationery. And then there's the income from my illustrations for Lizzy Lynn's *The Silver Horse* (Bluejay Press, 1984). For several months last spring I camped out in my office/studio with a stack of library books for source material, a new set of technical pens, plenty of bristol board, and drew fourteen full page illustrations for Lizzy's fantasy novel. It was great fun. My mom went into business several years ago as a word processing specialist, and last year asked me to design her business brochure. There were several jobs—T-Shirts, posters, and signs for the YWCA; and there were some other miscellaneous jobs that I'm forgetting about right now. But anyway, I've got all the invoices carefully filed, because it turns out that I'll have to pay social security tax on the income from these jobs. But I'm not at all concerned with the business of figuring which forms are needed for all this business. Not me.

The dotted-line drafting table (shown in the map of my office in the last issue of *Whimsy*) is now a solid line drafting table and is accompanied by a brand new solid line drafting chair. That and several other acquisitions from my business should balance everything out so that I won't actually show a profit in 1984 and should get a refund from the IRS. I have no idea how to work that out on all the forms I'm supposed to fill out this year, but again, I'm not worried. Not a bit.

Why not? A distant cousin of mine is an accountant, and I've hired him to do my taxes for me.

You didn't really expect to hear some remarkable success story of a reformed innumerate, did you? "Ooooo, I love doing my income taxes now! Whenever I feel depressed, I balance my checkbook again, it's so much fun!" Come on. I hired an accountant. It'll probably add on five years to my life. I figure it'll be worth it.

My cousin Jim, the accountant, does like filling in forms with long columns of numbers in his spare time. In fact, that's exactly what he does, in his spare time, that is. Jim's got about 25 clients—mostly people who free lance or do consulting work—and he takes care of their income tax returns for them. My returns are a little unusual, even in comparison to this group...

"So...where are your car expenses here?" Jim asked as he peered through the lower portions of his bifocals at my 1984 ledger book with its columns of check numbers and income and expenditure notations.

"I don't own a car," I explained.

Jim's eyes froze in their tracks. He paused and looked up at me over the rims of his glasses with an irritated expression. "Wrong answer," he said.

"But I've done deliveries and picked up supplies with my 10-speed. And I had to buy a new bike this year because the old one was stolen—"

"And these bus expenses?"

"I get around by bus in the winter." It just doesn't

pay to own a car if you live in a city like Madison, as far as I'm concerned. The bus system is excellent; I can get anywhere in town in about 20 minutes—45 minutes max if I have to backtrack and transfer—and from April to November I can get places even faster on my bike and keep in shape too. No expensive car costs, no gas, no repairs, no parking problems... I've never even been tempted to buy a car. When I need to get somewhere outside the city, I occasionally rent a car which is a relatively minor expense, but I do quite well without one.

Jim shook his head, grinning a little now. "This is going to be an interesting return..."

With my "unorthodox" business and lifestyle, I'm afraid I gave Jim several "wrong answers" (which meant that I'm not taking full advantage of the tax write-offs that the government allows small businesses). And I had to tell him that Sonya Johnson was the Citizen's Party presidential candidate in order to explain my donations to her organization, but for the most part there weren't any problems. All I have to do is sit back and wait for Jim to finish the job, thus completely missing my annual making-out-tax-forms headache. No adding, no subtracting, nothing: just sign my name and (I hope) wait for the refund check!

I recommend this course of action to all you innumerates out there who anticipate having to complete anything more strenuous than a short form.

## Chapter 5: Breathing and Other Sports

This June I will celebrate my fourth anniversary as a jock, and one lesson I've learned concerns the importance of good breathing technique. While weightlifting, the trick is just remembering to do it. As you strain to push the weights up, or out, or down, with all your strength, there's a great temptation to hold your breath. And so, one hears conversations like this one at Bodyworks:

"One...\*\*...two. One...\*\*...two. Push it up...\*\*...down, push it up...\*\*...down..."

"...!"

"Hey! Breathe!"

"psssssssssssss. Oh yeah, thanks. I forgot."

It's the same in the pool, too, but people rarely forget to breathe. If they haven't got their timing down well, they'll sometimes try to take as many strokes as they can before they breathe, but that sort of thing catches up with you eventually and they end up clinging to the side of the pool practicing hyperventilation. The trick with breathing while you swim is inhaling when your face is out of the water and exhaling when your face is in it. That probably sounds easier and more obvious than it actually turns out to be, but once you've got the hang of it, it's compulsive. For instance, whenever I get in the water I find it difficult to exhale unless I first submerge my face...even if I'm not actually swimming at the moment. Which makes for odd moments in the bathtub.

One of the really tricky breathing techniques is practiced by bicyclists. Here, too, rhythm is all important. Breath in, breath out, spit out bugs. Repeat.

These days the only breathing patterns on which I'm concentrating are those accompanying my (aquatic) front crawl. The attention is largely unconscious—except for the weeks last month when I was suffering with a bad cold and my exhaling strokes must have appeared rather "explo-





sive" to an observer on the pool deck, since I was combining some exhaling strokes with rather violent sneezes. Nevertheless, when healthy, I think I could swim a mile in my sleep. And in fact, sometimes after pushing myself out of the water onto the pool deck, it seems as if I'm waking up from a semi-conscious state. I can hardly remember the swim sometimes.

Some friends, to whom I've described swimming experiences, say that they are like those of someone in a trance. With each length of the pool, it's as if a voice far in the back of my mind sings each successive number of the length to me—like a Sesame Street mantra. Surprisingly (for an innumerate, I mean), I never lose track of the number of laps I've swum unless somebody tries to talk to me while I'm swimming and mentions something numerical to me. Then, my number evaporates like a dream that is impossible to retain upon waking. The subconscious lap-counter doesn't take all my attention, though. I usually enjoy fantasies or work on artwork in the "front" of my mind and ignore the mechanics of swimming almost entirely. That becomes automatic.

Sometimes it doesn't seem that I'm actually getting any exercise, I feel so relaxed afterwards. You don't get sweaty from swimming, you know. But the other day I asked the lifeguard to help me check my pulse rate right after my swim, and I'm apparently getting my heart rate well up into the useful range. I was concerned about it though, because since I've started swimming every weekday (and some weekends), my stroke has really improved. I've been swimming much, much faster, and it's come to feel...well...just too easy.

...As opposed to weightlifting which was feeling anything but easy last spring. My bench press weight had plateaued. I couldn't press anything more than my 30 reps of 132 pounds, and it looked as if I never would press more unless I wanted to start training more often than the hour, two-three times a week that I was already doing. And I didn't. Knowing that I probably wouldn't be improving any more, that from there on in, my "progress" would more or less stall in a holding pattern—well, I began to get bored. A bored weightlifter is a careless weightlifter, and this can sometimes be dangerous. Even on a universal gym set-up where a slip isn't fatal (as it could be with free weights), a careless person can unconsciously get into bad habits, incorrect ways of lifting or pressing that—cumulatively—are potentially more destructive than strengthening to muscles. And I found myself lapsing into some of the easier, but unhealthy lift patterns. I decided that I needed to take a vacation from Bodyworks.

It was summer and it was hot, so I started to swim every day and promised myself that in September I would go back to trading noon hour workouts between Bodyworks and the pool. Well, as it happened, the extra hours of laps were all my swimming stroke needed to dramatically improve—and suddenly I was streaking past every other swimmer in the pool. Swimming suddenly became effortless (at least for most of the conscious parts of my mind), and by the time September rolled around, I was having too much fun to quit my new schedule. My shoulders, back, and upper arms stayed muscular and firm even without the weightlifting. The front crawl turned out to be a sufficient substitute for bodybuilding, and thus my last motive for returning to Bodyworks crumbled. I love swimming and don't think I could ever get bored with it.

Which makes it strange to have all these letters responding to my weightlifting essay. Eric Mayer wanted to know if it "was necessary to lift enormous amounts of weight in order to work out." There are a few ways you can go about working out with weights. You can either work toward higher and higher weights to increase muscle bulk or you can work toward a larger and larger number of repetitions of a fairly low weight to increase muscle flexibility and maintenance. You can also work on a combination of these two programs, which is what I used to do. Or you can try for aerobic workouts—doing very low weights and many repetitions.

\*\*\*\*\*

Cath Easthope  
113, Abbey Road  
Erdington, Birmingham  
B23 7QQ England

...Hey you mentioned you were  
a "jock" and I had to ask Martin Tudor before I found out what one was.  
It sounded slightly obscene—some-

thing to do with jockstraps and sweat as far as I knew—and I'm told I wasn't all that wrong...

...I do feel guilty and inadequate when faced with someone super-fit like you, almost as though I've no right to call myself a real person because I'm not developing my body to its full potential. In other words, when confronted with someone who does things better than I do, they become my standard of excellence and I start to feel second rate. Now that I think about it this happens all the time. There are people who are "better" feminists than me (lesbian separatists?), there are people who have achieved higher standards of academic excellence (Ph.D's), there are lots more richer people than me, and there are people who have achieved a great deal through their careers. Really dynamic and successful career women scare me because I should be able to do what they do as well. Strangely enough, career men don't scare me at all. If I have any reaction there, it's just resentment that you've got to be twice as good as they are to get to where they are.

\*\*\*\*\*

The reason I enjoy sports like biking, swimming, and (in previous years) weightlifting, is because they can be solitary sports. I can do them on my own, by myself. There's no need to constantly compare one's progress with someone racing in the next lane or against teammate's expectations. The only comparison is yourself. Competitive sports aren't my style: I tend to get suddenly awkward in a basketball or volleyball game, far too aware that my teammates need me to perform well. A competitive atmosphere is definitely no motivation for me as it seems to be for other people. Sounds like you might like to try some sort of non-competitive sport yourself. Don't worry about what other people are or aren't doing. After all there are always going to be people who are better than anyone else at just about anything. No one would do anything if they needed to wait till they could find something at which they were the absolute best.

The term "jock" does refer to jockstraps, sweat, and other obscene references, etc. Formerly, I used the word complete with all its derisive references to describe my younger brother and other students whose whole lives seemed to revolve around the locker room. To me, "jock" meant mindless machismo. "Jock" meant a person opposite the kind for which I had respect. Then, an intelligent jock would have been a contradiction in terms. I didn't get along very well with my younger brother in those days. So now, as I've begun finding value in some of the activities and points of view for which I used to hold so much scorn, I refer to myself as a jock in a sort of self-kidding manner. I use it now because I consider the categories silly fictions that used to seem such obvious reflections of reality.

\*\*\*\*\*

Bernadette Bosky  
819 W. Markham Ave.  
Durham, NC 27701

I do think that the standard of feminine beauty is switching to one that emphasizes health instead of weakness, and I do think that's a very good thing. I'm not sure how that ties in with bodybuilding, though, however you want to divide it up. As you point out, muscle bulk is in no way inherently healthy, and can be quite unhealthy if not done right. The kind of specific strength it develops isn't one that is often used, by males or females, in daily life. I feel about it, I suppose, as I do about my own ability to do, say a complete front-split, which is also pretty useless in daily life when you think about it: it ensures one gets to the level of fitness which I think anyone can benefit from; in going a good deal beyond that, it's no longer a matter of health, but becomes a hobby in which, as in any diversion—*de gustibus* and all that—the main thing is that it's something one does well and enjoys, with the benefits to mind & body that always brings, regardless of what the diversion is.

\*\*\*\*\*

Debbie Notkin  
680 66th Street  
Oakland, CA 94609

I think you're right about the relationship between bodybuilding and status, but I wouldn't dismiss the more obvious relationship between bodybuild-

ing and strength. It isn't in the interests of a male-dominated society for women to be able to take power, and it isn't in the interests of most individual men for women to be stronger than they are. Think of the implications for wife-beating, to choose an obvious example. If women continue to fit the old picture you describe (idle, weak, lacking in stamina, delicate), they continue to be at the mercy of active strong men, who thus retain control and power. If, on the other hand, women use their bodies as men are encouraged to use their bodies, the relationship changes, fast. So status isn't the only consideration which leads to male (and female) ambivalence about women bodybuilders. Me, I think it's fantastic, and I think you probably underestimate the amount of work and effort you've put into it. (Literally) more power to you!

\*\*\*\*\*

Joy Hibbert  
11 Rutland St.  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST1 5JG England

...I read an article last week, in *Forum* (a magazine of human relations, i.e., a sex magazine without the sexism, that discusses different areas of sex, gender and sexuality) about why this belief that athletes (assumed to be male) should not have sex the night before a race, fight, whatever. They looked at lots of articles about this, talked to a few people, and pointed out that it was the most distinctly male sports (e.g., boxing) that this rule still applied most. Eventually they found there was no physical reason for this belief, or as one man said, "you can put back the energy lost from having sex with the first cup of tea with two spoonfuls of sugar." But there was a psychological reason too. A few quotes later, the writer says, "anger and aggression must be generated and they must be generated towards an opposition...not wasted on the wrong things." Or, as a boxer's wife put it, you accept this abstention from sex before a fight because, "it's to cause aggression...instead of taking their urge out on you they take it out on the other fighter." Do you think this is true, and does it apply to women athletes too, or not?

\*\*\*\*\*

Whew! One more reason for giving up bodybuilding...

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 6: Tall Tales and Big George

George Knudsen is a big man. When he retired two years ago from the Department of Natural Resources and his position as Wisconsin's Chief Naturalist, I drew a caricature of him as Paul Bunyan, and some people didn't notice that it was a caricature. There's an old photo of a much younger George, before he got to be the Chief Naturalist and moved to an office in Madison, when he was in charge of a

George  
Knudsen  
IS RETIRING  
AFTER  
33 YEARS!!



Black Bear survey up in the north woods. The photo shows George from the point of view of the bear upon which his foot rests. George's arms are folded proudly over his enormous chest, that hasn't shrunk even now, but just looked rather silly, all cramped and tucked into the chair behind his desk at the DNR. He's just tossed a shock of the black hair off his forehead in the photo (that's no problem now: it's white and too thin to fall into his eyes); and he looks big. He is very powerful-looking even now.

George is also one of the most knowledgeable people I have ever met. He knows the common and the latin name for every blade of grass, every tree, every flower, every reptile, every insect, and every animal you can find in North America. I think he knows almost everything there is to know about surviving alone in the wilderness and has made his own home practically self-sufficient. Madison Gas & Electric pays him for electricity. And besides that, he's just about one of the most entertaining people I know. I could listen to him for hours talking about anything he wanted to talk about. Most of his conversation is a mixture of nature lore and tall tales...George resembles Paul Bunyan in more ways than just physically.

He's got several big sons (of course) that he talks about quite a lot, who do things like extinguish big oil derrick fires, chop down giant trees, and live alone in log cabins out in the middle of the big prairie out west. "Big" is one of George's favorite words. One time George was telling me about one of his sons, Jeff, who lives in the log cabin, and how Jeff had killed a buck out on the prairie about ten miles away from home. Jeff was on foot and the deer was a big one (of course) and so Jeff had to cut the carcass apart, right there on the prairie, and carry it back home in pieces. While he was doing that, some guys rode past on their horses, took in Jeff's dilemma and offered to help him transport the deer on their horses. Jeff considered the generous offer, but refused, saying that he'd rather do the job himself. In telling the story, George huffed a little about Jeff's stubbornness but I could tell that he was pretty proud of his big son. And he chuckled as he said that Jeff took a long time to do it, but that he got that whole big buck back to his place, cured it, and stored it away, all on his own.

George was telling me this story in between bits of advice on morel-spotting. In payment for a drawing I'd done for him, George was taking me morel hunting, an outing that everyone at the DNR envied me, I'm sure, because George, like all morel fanciers, guards his knowledge of morels carefully. And George's morel secrets were apt to be more valuable than those of the ordinary morel lovers' secrets. Morels can't be cultivated, George reminded me. No one has ever discovered a way to raise these delectable mushrooms that taste like steak when sauteed in butter. No one can even predict for sure where they will be found from season to season. Oh, they're generally found around the trunks of elm trees that have been dead for three to four years, but not always, and hardly ever will a place, fruitful one year, be the place to look next year.

It was pouring rain out. We'd only been out a half hour and I was wearing good rain gear, but already my clothing was soaked. But there was no postponing morel hunting for another weekend. Morels only grow for a period of a few weeks in the early spring—at the same time wild asparagus—and we were already approaching the end of the season. It was now or never. We were climbing a steep ridge and George had already found three small morels that I hadn't noticed, but George thought he'd taught me enough so that we should split up and try to cover more territory.

"OK, George," I said. And I climbed off to the left, eventually grabbing hold of a fern plant as my foot started to slide down the muddy, slippery incline. I caught myself as I fell to my knees (getting even wetter and muddier than I'd been before) and there, right in front of my eyes, on the path I was trying to reach, was an enormous morel, about nine inches long and four inches across. It was lying across the path as if someone had carefully laid it there. "George!" I called, exasperated that he had set me up this way so that I could "find" a morel. I had no doubts that he'd put it there. Off to my right I could hear George approaching. But then I saw the rest of the morels.

"George!" I yelled, this time not at all irritated, just ex-



cited. "Look at this!"

By the time George got there I was counting the number of morels growing in a ring around of all things, a healthy Burr Oak tree. There were a dozen morels and they were all enormous, some of them having fallen over like the first one I saw, from their own weight. I felt as though I'd walked into one of George's tall tales. We cut them down and laid them carefully in the wicker basket strapped onto George's back and he told me how very unusual it was to find morels in a ring, and how impossible it was to find them around a Burr Oak tree. About a half hour later we found the second ring of giant Burr Oak morels, and several minutes after those were collected, we found a third ring of Burr Oak morels. We collected almost 14 pounds of morels that morning and George had another anecdotal story of "big" proportions with which to regale friends and family.

But since we'd been so successful so early on in the day, and since the weather was starting to clear up, George suggested a second part for our field trip. He wanted to collect a rattlesnake to use as part of a talk and demonstration he was going to present in a week and so we drove off to a ridge he knew that overlooks the Wisconsin River. By the time we'd struggled to the top of the very steep ridge, with me holding on to George's belt at times, it had begun drizzling.

But the view over the river was wonderful. The river ran about a mile beyond the ridge and several hundred feet below us, and the mists were tumbling over its surface, while the sky was turning several shades of pink and purple as the sun set behind the clouds.

"Pay attention, Jeanne," George suddenly barked.

"There's rattlesnakes up here."

"I don't see any," I said.

"There's one right there." George nodded vaguely ahead of him.

I stood very still and peered in that direction but couldn't see anything. "Where?"

"Right....there," George said, pointing. I still couldn't see anything, and George slowly stooped until his finger pointed only a few feet from the coiled (and sleepy) snake. It being a cold and wet day, the snake was pretty groggy. We were lucky to even find a rattler that wasn't in its den. But I suddenly saw it and gasped at how easily I could have been fooled by its coloration and perhaps, would have stepped on it, had it not been for George's warning.

"That one's too small," George said and started to detour around the snoozing rattlesnake. "Stay behind me, Jeanne."

"I'm right behind you, George." And, boy, was I.

When George found the second snake, he again had to point it out to me, and I stood stock still as he caught its head with a pair of metal tongs and then transferred the hold to his hand (the snake's head gently and carefully held between thumb and forefinger, its tail thrashing back and forth below), and lowered it into a canvas sack. We were done, I thought. George had his snake. And my heart stopped hammering in my ears.

But as we started to retrace our steps, another rattler announced its presence ahead of us and this snake turned out to be a granddaddy of a rattler, a really big one. I don't think I could have compassed its largest girth with my hand, and I've got a good sized (better than an octave) hand span. Anyway, George threw out the first snake and went after this one, and had a little more difficulty this time because this snake was so much stronger. After he'd gotten a good hold on its head and was holding it so that its tail didn't touch the ground—having to hold it at eye level to do so—George



said he needed help getting the thing into the sack and asked me to hold the sack open.

I started to tell him that I couldn't do that, but discovered that I no longer had a voice available to me. And by the way he was holding the bag out to me, realized that he was expecting me to hop to it. And so without thinking much more about it, I grabbed the sack, closed my eyes, turned away and held the thing open for George. A few seconds later the snake was inside and George had grabbed the bag from my hands. And I started breathing again. Like the cathartic climax of a bad movie, it thundered and the rain started to come down hard.

George put the carefully tied-up canvas sack into his wicker backpack and we started walking slowly down the treacherous slope, holding on to trees and saplings at each stage, trying to prevent our feet from sliding out from under us. At one point George almost lost it he grabbed a tree and I grabbed him and we just managed to save him from falling on his back onto the basket and the snake.

I grinned after the crisis was over. I was finally going to get the punchline on George out of this one, I thought.

"George..." I said.

"Yes, Jeanne?"

"George, if you had fallen down and hurt yourself up here, you know I'd have had to cut you up and carry you home in pieces!"

We laughed all the way back down to the car.

## Chapter 7: Corpse By Fischer and Like That

Remember back in issue #2 of *Whimsy* when I invited you to send me examples of silly English translations? Well I got lots of them. I got photocopies, packages, and tear-stained sheets of directions. I even got an un-opened package of prawn crackers, ready for deep frying, from Ellen Kushner.

I almost feel guilty making fun of these imported typos when I've made so many home-grown ones, but here goes...

...To serve Pigeon Brand Prawn Crackers: Heat the lard or vegetable oil in a frying pan to the boiling point and then put in Prawn Crackers for deep-frying until floating. Their exquisite crispness in taste will make a very good dish both at meal and for a cut of wine. (from the Pigeon Brand Prawn Crackers package, imported from China, sent in by Ellen Kushner)

...now add the shaken eggs, stir with energy and serve immediately...Cut aubergines into thin slices following the length of the vegetable; put salt on the slices laid on an inclined dish in order to allow the water they get out to slip away...Add spinach after defrozing and cook slowly with low flame for 10 minutes, stirring often...After five minutes strain and let become tasty in butter; join minced tuna. Stir, add cream and warm the whole; cook lasagne in salted boiling water and flavour with the above sauce. Serve with abundant parmesan cheese...200 gr. of mozzarella (cow-buffalo's milk cheese)... (From the Marcato brand Pasta maker recipe book, selections from several recipes, sent in by Rick Gomoll who "envisioned" "water, ashamed of itself, getting out at the last minute and slipping away down a dark inclined dish."

...Shanghai Surgical Instruments are good in assortments. Now we can supply you with General Surgical Instruments, Dental Instruments and Materials. Ear, Nose and Throat Instruments, Orthopaedic Instruments, Microscopic Instruments and various other instruments... (from an ad for SMIC China National Chemicals Import and Export Corporation, sent in by Joseph Nicholas)

...The Ai-version of UNIX is a result of many months' engineering which are backed up by our accumulated professional experiences in computer technology, and thus we have chosen to use the name of ai-KUDOS86, rather than using the UNIX itself. Reflecting to our above spirit and our confidence in the Ai-version of UNIX, we therefore wish for your kind sympathizer's patronage for the name of "ai-KUDOS86". (from an Ai Electronics Corp announcement, sent in by Joyce Scrivner)

It is a baby creature in an egg. 6 different babies in their shells. Open the shell, out comes a baby—Chick, Duck, Penguin, Turtle, Bird or Crocodile....This toy intending to encourage creative play and curiosity has been manufactured under the high quality standards of C. Nordon. It complies with all the child protection and toy safety. (from a Nordon, Hong Kong, package, sent in by Jeanne Bowman)

...We offer a fantastic variety of beautiful silk garments which will be the significant things in a trendy fashion market.

In addition, we would like to expand collaboration and trade ties with fashion experts in the world, i.e.,: We can manufacture garments with clients' designs and material. Our excellent workmanship will make designers' ideas come to truth.

We also supply with a wide range of silk fabrics. Prompt delivery is guaranteed. (From an ad for SS China Silk Corporation, sent in by Joseph Nicholas)

...make several winds of threads then winds towards you; put the bobbin now on the bobbin winder spindle and make it sure that a cut hole on the side of the bobbin must be exactly fixed to the pin at the bottom of the spindle... (From a Spanish-made sewing machine, sent in by D. M. Sherwood)

Darrol Pardoe

116 Cote Lea Square  
Southgate, Runcorn  
Cheshire WA7 2SA  
England

Ro's mum recently acquired a new sewing machine, of Japanese origin, and had to work out how to assemble and use it all by herself, because the instruction book wasn't in English, or even Japanese. It consisted entirely of diagrams (with no text). That would have been OK had the diagrams been clear and sensible, and easy to follow. But they were actually completely opaque to human reason, and seemed to bear little relation to the machine itself.

\* \* \* \*

Well then, maybe what happened is that your mum received the instructions to my Italian-made drafting table. I think that my mostly-diagrammed instruction sheet portrayed a thing more closely resembling a sewing machine than a drafting table. And the minimal text may as well have been in Japanese.

"Attach A to B," it said simply. "A" was the table part; "B" was the rest of the assembly. But there was no simple way to attach A to B. And after much puzzling and several calls to the US distribution office which finally sent someone out to help, it turned out that holes needed to be drilled and bolts attached. I don't drill holes into expensive drafting tables unless the instructions explicitly say "drill a hole here, right here, that's it, right on the mark. It's OK, really, you won't hurt the table; it's necessary and we're not kidding. Go ahead." Needless to say, these minimal instructions are not too reassuring.

## Chapter 8: Why Does the Morning Have to Come So Early?

Julie has always had a hard time waking up.

She's my sister and I suppose the problem must run in the family. They tell me that I'm no piece of cake to wake up either, though how you'd wake up a piece of cake I don't know. Well, maybe that's the point. Anyway, one story goes that when I was about fifteen years old, I fell from the top bunk one night, and woke everyone in the house but myself. After that episode I lost the coveted top bunk to Julie whose sleep at the time tended less to violence and ambulation. There are lots of stories about me sleepwalking and doing or saying bizarre things in my sleep. They're the sort of stories horded by every family that get told in the most awkward possible times—usually to the new friends, employers and lovers of the family members whose fondest wish at such times is that these tales might be entirely forgotten. So don't expect me to repeat family gossip about me here...I've heard it all too often already. Ask my mom. Or Julie. After this little story gets published, she'll probably be more than eager to tell you stories about me.

I just want to establish the fact that the Gomoll sisters have a rather distinguished record in the area of imaginative avoidance of morning consciousness. For instance, the finest moment of my somnolent self was the time I dreamed that I'd been visited by a little green man from outer space who presented me with the gift of a time machine, with which I could stop everybody else's time and so steal time for myself to get projects finished or books read or sleep a few extra hours. Well, of course I pushed the "on" switch on the mechanism right away, figuring to start off with the few hours of extra sleep and catch up on work later. And, of course, I woke up an hour late to discover that the "on" switch had been for the alarm on my bedside table. I'd switched it off. Nowadays I rely on a radio timer. A mere half hour of news and music will gradually wake me up early enough to preserve my job.

Well, Julie's waking problem makes mine look like a mild case of the yawns.

The most recent episode started one day when Julie had overslept and got to work late. This in itself—arriving late to work—was a catastrophic thing for her. Of all the virtues Julie possesses, she flaunts her obsessive punctual-

ity most annoyingly. (How many times have I heard the words, "you're late, Jeanne"? or mocking laughter when I innocently promise to appear at a certain time... So you must understand why I take a little pleasure in telling you that Julie was late.) She works as a typesetter and graphic artist with a small weekly advertising newspaper where work time is rarely bound by the traditional business hours of 9-5, but tends to drift regularly into the evening. Over-time seems more business-as-usual at Sunshine Press than an exception, and so arriving later in the morning was not so much a career catastrophe as it was, for Julie, a personal affront to her self-image.

Still, when she returned was bothered by the problem. Spike, Julie's housemate, asked her if she'd had a nightmare the night before. "It sounded like you were beating up on your clock," Spike said. "That's funny," Julie replied. "My alarm clock didn't go off this morning. I think it's broken." She went out and bought a new clock radio, having remembered nothing of any bad dreams and thinking that the broken clock must have fallen off the bedside table during the night.

The next morning, the new clock radio lay wasted, damaged in such a purposeful manner that no appliance clerk would ever authorize its replacement on warranty. The cord had been ripped out not only from the wall but from the innards of the clock radio; its case was dented as if someone had pogo stuck on and into its case. Again Julie was late for work, and again, she remembered nothing unusual from the night before. But it was now pretty obvious that the clock's sabotage was no accident.

Julie went back to a local department store and bought another clock, this time a less expensive timepiece, one without AM/FM reception. She set the alarm and placed the clock on her dresser, a good distance away from her bed. But the next morning she again woke up more than an hour after she had planned on starting work. This would be the third late day of the week. She looked across the room at her dresser top. No clock. She glanced down at the floor beside the dresser. No wreckage. The clock was nowhere in the room; it had simply disappeared. Later, though, as she heated up some coffee for a hasty breakfast she found it.



The new clock sat undamaged beside the toaster on the kitchen cabinet, its cord and plug dangling over the formica edge like the leafless vine of an unwatered coleus plant.

Things were getting pretty serious. Julie told some of her friends about her problem getting up in the morning. We joked nervously about her sleeping self's determination to avoid waking and to what lengths it might go next to continue dreaming undisturbed. We nervously examined the remains of the smashed clock radio. We suggested that Spike wake her up, but Spike worried aloud—considering the things Julie's sleeping self had done to mere machines that threatened to wake her up—what Julie might do to Spike if threatened with consciousness from the next room.

It was the weekend and there was time to consider options. Julie wouldn't have to wake up on schedule for a couple days. And so a plan was developed. We worked out a schedule of callers, employing people who would be awake and competent enough at the necessary hour to telephone Julie and Spike's apartment. Julie had a phone in her room, and so we figured the problem would be solved.

Of course we were all woefully naive about the obstinacy of Julie's sleeping self. Monday morning, when Julie finally woke—long after she'd hoped to wake, and, again, late for work—she found the phone packed and wrapped with towels and clothing inside a duffle bag, the receiver separated from the phone, itself wrapped in a double layer of towels. The week's first caller had attempted the wake-up call several times and gotten a busy signal for his trouble.

That evening Spike proposed another plan. While Julie was gone, she (Spike) would hide a small travel alarm clock somewhere in Julie's room. Unable to focus any destructive energy on a potential waking force because she didn't know where it was, Julie would be roused at the right time the next morning. The plan seemed foolproof and so when Spike got up the next morning—an hour after Julie should have left—she was amazed to discover the innovative way that Julie had found to evade the prearranged awakening. My sister was asleep on the living room couch, the door to her bedroom firmly closed, behind which the travel alarm clock's buzzer had long ago run down in whatever corner Spike had hidden it.

For all the sleep Julie was supposedly getting, her eyes now began to take on a haggard, tired appearance. There were bags under her eyes and she frequently complained of headaches. Getting more sleep, turning in earlier, seemed to make no difference in her waking patterns or her weariness. The situation was clearly getting out of hand. Soon Julie would violate even the lax punctuality standards of Sunshine Press. Already there were questions, warnings. And besides that, she was so frightened by the Hyde-like character who was manipulating her life during its nighttime shift. And more and more she began to fear going to bed at all, to dread what she'd discover she'd done the next morning.

And each night the sleeping Hyde grew stronger.

Spike finally relented and agreed to take responsibility for waking Julie up the next morning. Spike returned from a movie one evening to find the apartment door lock jammed. She ended up having to spend the night with a friend. There seemed to be no lengths at which sleeping Julie would stop to get those few extra hours of sleep each morning. The situation seemed hopeless.

One of the engineers in the group suggested a complex system of lenses arranged on the porch outside Julie's room, so, with the drapes and shade removed, the sun itself would wake her up. What could Julie do to stop the sun from rising? Ah...

Well, I can feel myself slipping into fantasy now. Family stories are supposed to be exaggerated, and I admit that there are some exaggerations in the story as I've told it so far, but I guess this is going too far. Julie eventually conquered her waking problem with several trips to the chiropractor who discovered that she had some rather severe problems with her backbones. After some therapy, Julie's sleeping patterns returned to normal; she began waking refreshed and, importantly, on time. Still, the whole episode does give me some reserve ammunition for the times she badgers me too much about my tardiness...

The episode also gives me the chance to sort of prepare fandom for the "new" Julie Gomoll, who gets a little tired of being asked if she isn't the sister of one Jeanne Gomoll. The new Julie Gomoll's name compliments her roommate's Spike's nicely. Call her Crash, now, if you see her at a con. Really.

## Chapter 9: Promises, Promises

Terry Carr

11037 Broadway Terrace  
Oakland, CA 94611

Thanks for *Whimsy*, which I agree

with Tucker should continue to be typed just like that, in honor of fannish traditions. A couple of notes re Yerke's *The Knavve* and *The Damn Thin*: I suspect both of these were deliberate "misspellings." Though I don't have the first issue of *The Knavve*, I do see that the titles on both issues #s 2 and 3 were hand-lettered rather than letteringquid as Tucker remembers; if the title on #1 was done the same way, the likelihood of its having been a "typo" diminishes. Be that as it may, the issue of *The Damn Thing* that Yerke titled *The Damn Thin* was almost certainly done deliberately that way: the colophon says, "Unfinished issue #6," and the issue is noticeably shorter than the previous ones. Evidently Yerke ran out of gas halfway through it (he never published another issue, and gaffied shortly afterward) and acknowledged the issue's incomplete nature by slightly changing the title.

The all-time record for embarrassing titles, though, goes surprisingly to Redd Boggs, probably fandom's all-time most impeccable publisher. About thirty years ago he published an index to *Astounding*; it was as meticulously done as all his fanzines, save for the title, which proclaimed in half-inch-high letters, *THE ASTOUDING STORY KEY*. Red still remembers that gaffe; he mentioned it just last year in tones of amusement and a little rue.

More directly relevant to *Whimsy* was a fanzine published by Miriam Carr (now Miriam Knight) in 1960, titled *Uneven*. I was there, so I know that was done deliberately.

\* \* \* \*

There are too many witnesses—and more importantly, too many people who know me too well—for me to ever get away with a claim that the missing "e" in *Whimsy* was deliberate. So, as you can see, I'm taking your advice and making the mistake a permanent part of *Whimsy*'s spelling. I hope, though, that the rest of the words in this issue are typed more...um...traditionally. They should be. I've got a new proofreader, or "ghost-speller" as she calls herself. In a note attached to the corrected galleys of this zine, Spike wrote, "...kid, you can't spell. Let's face it, you need me." So, the first promise is better spelling. John Bartelt is busy out there in California counting all my spelling errors: he should have more time for less tedious activities and fewer statistics to collect from now on. All spelling errors, from now on, can be blamed on Spike. Got that, John?

The second promise is that I'll publish a few *Whimsy*'s this year, more anyway, than I did last year. This issue turned out to be mostly about people. I didn't really plan it that way; it just happened, and probably reflects the focus of my life these days. But next time, I'm going to write about and to fanzines and some conversations going on in them.

A last promise is an enigmatic caution to those of you who might have been convinced that I've already moved. Don't believe any coa's for me until later in the summer. I still live at 409 S. Brooks St., Madison, WI 53715. I promise.

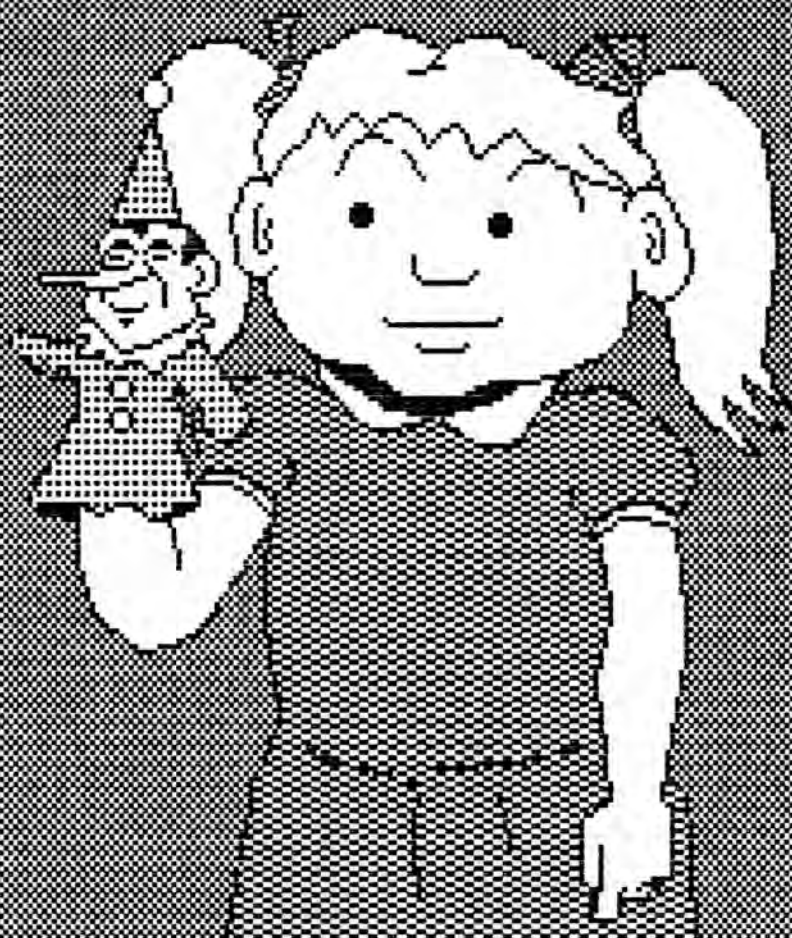
Having made all the promises I'm willing to make at the moment (lucky I don't feel the necessity to move to England or anything like that...), here are some thank-yous:

Thanks to Al Sirois for the artwork on the mailing cover and thanks to Atom for the illustrations on pages 5 and 6, and to Alexis Gilliland for his cartoon on page 8, and to Spike for proofreading. And thanks to all of you for writing!

Jeanne Gomoll

13 March 1985

**THE  
SMITHS**



©SIROIS 84

**SF<sup>3</sup>**

Box 1624  
Madison, WI  
53701-1624

Non-Profit Org.  
US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Madison, WI  
Permit No. 2414

**Address Correction Requested**