

Whimsy



This issue of *Whimsey* #7, Obsessive Press #132, dated August 1992, was supposed to include sections on storytelling, family and fanish mythologies, some fanzine reviews, and an essay on the 1960s. But it's been a long time since *Whimsey* #6. A lot has happened in my life and I feel the need to catch up; to tell you what I've been doing and what has happened in the last five years. Which means that I will still talk quite a bit about storytelling and very little about the 1960s, but also that I owe an apology to all those letter writers whose Locs don't appear here. However, I plan the next issue for sometime within the next year, and promise that I will return to my habit of weaving letters and essays then. If you are new on my mailing list or don't remember the format of former *Whimseys*, this is how Luke McGuff described it:

I have an image of you [Jeanne] standing in front of a vast array of recording devices, moderating with your pieces between letters and so on, then going over to a particular recording box and turning up the volume for a bit, turning it back down when it's done, and going on with your talk.

In a fit of ambitiousness I once typed all the letters I received in response to the last issue of *Whimsey* onto disk. It's conceivable that I will make use of parts of them in a future issue when the conversation swings back to familiar territory, but in the meantime, here's a list of (and an apology to) those who wrote: T. Kevin Atherton, Jim Barker, Ruth Berman, George Bondar, Bill Bowers, Brian Earl Brown, rich brown, Buck Coulson, Dave D'Amassa, Don D'Amassa, Phil Davenport, Hal Davis, Mog Decarnin, Gary Farber, Gil Gaier, Mike Glicksohn, Judith Hanna, Chuch Harris, Jane Hawkins, Irwin Hirsh, Steve Hubbard, Terry Jeeves, Steven Johnson, Christine Kulyk, Peter Larsen, Ethel Lindsay, Mark Manning, Vera Matich, Luke McGuff, Jeanne M. Mealy, Christine Morris, Lynne Ann Morse, Elizabeth Ann Osborne, Pat Phibbs, Bernie Phillips, Tom Quale, Bill Rotsler, Jessica Amanda Salmonson, Johan Schimanski, Nick Shears, Michael Sherck, Craig Smith, David Stever, David Thayer, Pascal J. Thomas, Sue Thomason, Harry Warner, Jr., Jean Weber, Ted White, and Walt Willis.

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An Adventure



We absolutely did not want to be the kind of visitors who blow in, tired and exhausted, wake up and say to our hosts, "Gee, it's too bad we don't have more time," and take off for home again. But to avoid that scenario we would need to drive long hours. A leisurely trip to San Francisco was out of the question. Scott could only get ten days off for the trip and it was crucial that we take our car with us: Three days out and three days back would leave only four days to spend with friends.

*We packed the car the night before. I picked Scott up immediately after he finished his shift at 7 am on Sunday morning, and drove the first four hours while he slept beside me wearing earplugs and sleeping mask to shut out noise and the morning light. I listened to NPR news on the radio and then switched to Walkman earphones and a recorded novel from the library. Already, several characters had been found gruesomely murdered, and the secret CIA spy posing as a circus trapeze artist was crossing the Iron Curtain in Alistair MacLean's *Circus*, when—in the real world—dueling semitrucks forced me onto an off-ramp. That's when Scott woke up.*

*"Why are we heading north to Cedar Falls? Aren't we supposed to be heading west?" he could have demanded. But he was too polite or too sleepy. "Anything wrong?" he asked instead. I turned off at the next exit, headed back south, and quickly returned the car to Interstate 80. Then Scott took the wheel until he got tired four hours later, and slept four hours while I drove again. By the end of my second stint, the sun had dipped low in the sky and we had penetrated deep into Nebraska. Counterespionage agents threatened the CIA agent/hero of *Circus* from all sides and in fact may even have killed him, (what a cliff-hanger!), though the fact that several tapes remained argued against this plot-stopping fate. A storm churned the skies directly ahead of us. I woke Scott and we watched the awesome sight of a thundercloud as it expanded across and up into our horizon. The radio announcer described its progress. "In case of lightening, stay in your car. It's the safest place," he warned us.*

That was the last time we heard a radio voice in the course of our trip. After passing through the northern edge of the storm, the radio died. The LEDs lit up, but the tiny amnesiac monitor glowed blankly; and the speakers remained utterly silent throughout the trip—incapable even of producing static. Later, when we checked, the fuses looked OK but eventually we would have to replace the radio entirely. Nevertheless, as we emerged from the western edge of the storm we did not miss audio distraction. All our attention was focused upon the impressive double rainbow that stretched across the sky. Pretty gorgeous, for Nebraska, we thought. Gorgeous for anywhere. Only later, hungry for news, did we discover that the radio had gone mute.

*There was plenty more gorgeous scenery coming up, plus an ironically chosen book that we would read aloud to one another (Garrison Keillor's *WLT: A Radio Romance*), lots of conversation, and lots of time to think...*

I Crash the Party: Wading In

Well at least I assume there's still a party going on out there while I've been lying here on the beach.

Robert Lichtman wrote me ages ago, referring to his location somewhere in the main flow of fandom. I wrote back confessing that I was stagnating in the backwaters. The only proof I had at the time to offer against indictments of total gafia was a little apazine—*Union Street*—that I co-publish with my housemate, Scott Custis. There's more evidence now. I waded in with *Union Street* and have since gotten wet up past my knees with the Tiptree Award, WisCon and a local fanish renaissance. But if it had not been for Scott's insistence that we rejoin the apa, I may not even have gotten my feet wet again...



I had originally joined the Madison-based *Turbo-Charged Party Animal* when it was first conceived by Andy Hooper about four years ago, but then, after some upheavals in my personal life, dropped out. Well, like many so-called non-fans who live with active fans, it turned out that Scott had been surreptitiously reading *Turboapa*, and then—when I dropped—discovered that he'd become addicted to the monthly fix of fannish communication served up in the apa. So after things settled down a bit in my non-fannish life, he asked if I would be re-joining.

"I don't know," I answered absently.

"Do you think you might consider it if we submitted a joint apazine?" This time, I looked up, conscious now that this was not a casual conversation.

"What did you say?"

Finally, Scott admitted that he missed the conversations in the apa among people he was getting to know since he moved to Madison from Iowa in 1987. And we both admitted that we missed the gossiping and conversation between the two of us that each issue of the apa precipitated. Still, I was surprised at his suggestion. Even though he hangs out with fans all the time, he maintained that he wasn't really a fan. You know the type.

So we rejoined the *Turbo-Charged Party Animal* apa (by this time managed by OE, Kim Nash) with a new zine title, *Union Street*, referring to the joint nature of our zine and the name of the street on which we live.

Since then, Scott's gotten wet, fannishly speaking. He's attended lots of cons, regularly attends the weekly Madison fangroup meetings, was elected Vice-President of SF² in 1990, reads fanzines and occasionally locs them, and—the ultimate signifier of membership in the fannish community—gossips about fans.

"So, tell me everything you know about Lillian Edwards and Tommy McClellan," Scott said somewhere in Wyoming. Lillian had phoned before we left Madison to tell us that they would be traveling from the UK to Chicago for a Law conference in early August and would we like to see them while they were in the area? Of course we would, especially since Lillian had missed Madison during her 1988 TAFF trip. But since we would be out of town for the first part of their visit to Madison, would they like to visit with Madison fandom and use our house until we returned? That was how we arranged to have two friendly faces posted at our house to welcome us home from our trip. And that was how Scott and I passed one of many hours on the road to California—gossiping about fans.

Scott doesn't protest the label "fan" when others apply it to him anymore, not since Judge Gregory G. H. Rihn handed down the verdict in the famous 1992 WisCon fan trial. Lorelei Manney defended Scott, along with her husband—so-called non-fan George Perkins—as best she could, considering the fact that both her clients cheerfully provided so much incriminating evidence against themselves. I had the easy job. I was the prosecuting attorney; the audience acted (and whooped and shouted) the role of jury. Ballots were handed out after the cases were presented and Scott and George were pronounced fannish as charged. Judge Rihn ordered Scott and George never again to protest the fannish label.

My cases were fairly easy to prove. George provided me with lovingly wrapped copies of a fanzine he used to publish, the last issue of which contained an editorial by himself in which he vowed that his involvement in fandom would never really end. The evidence against Scott was more wide-ranging and current. Scott had written a letter to *Spent Brass* in which he used technical fannish terminology ("KTF," etc.), to critique Peter Larsen's

fanzine reviews. The photograph of Scott talking animatedly to BNF's Ted White and Jon Singer caused murmurs to ripple through the audience. The very long list of conventions Scott has attended, the fact that he participates in convention activities of his own volition, his regular attendance of weekly Madison fangroup meetings, his letters of comment, the fact that he has voted in several TAFF elections, his term as Vice-President of SF², his long-standing co-editorship of some 30 issues of an apazine with me and a one-shot with Ellen Franklin... It all came out and the audience turned against him.

"Hang him!" they laughed. "He's a Fan, Fan, Fan, FAN, FAN!" they chanted.

One of the funniest moments of the trial came when David Emerson mounted the witness stand and testified as an expert witness on the subject of "Delayed Fannish Identification Syndrome." David himself, of course, used to be a tragic victim of this dread ailment, denying fannishness for years until—with the help of a 12-step program—he was finally able to accept the essential fannishness of his behavior.

The trial was lots of fun because Scott and George were such good sports about it all. I had a great time, walking into the room wearing a jacket, carrying a brief case, and firing off questions to the witnesses. The whole convention was a good one for me, in fact. The trial along with another important element of the con rekindled my fannish spirits and I felt, in a way, that I had "come back" after a long absence.

I Make My Excuses



I've been away.

As many of you know, one of the things that drew me away from active participation in fandom was the health of my brother Rick. He learned that he was HIV positive in the spring of 1988 and died of AIDS in October of 1989.

Before we left home for college, Rick and I used to visit the library together during the summer months and to the consternation of our parents, would each check out the maximum number of books allowed. ("Why don't you go outside and enjoy the summer?!" they'd frequently complain. "OK, I'll just finish this one last chapter," we'd say.) During the week, we'd finish our own books and then start on the other's stash. We were both voracious readers in those days, and though I still read quite a bit, I don't think I'll ever feel again the obsessive, fanatical emotions of those days, when books provided most of my entertainment, information about the world around me, and even a primary emotional outlet. I remember panicky nightmares involving book shortages... *Sigh* Now I worry about finishing the books on my "to read" shelf before I have to buy a new shelf. Well, I was young. And our community's library was a small one.

Anyway, one summer I began to wonder about my sexuality. I had already discovered what sex was through books, which is a funny story that some of you may already have read (in *Pulp*). But now I wondered about my own, personal connection to sex; and in fact I doubted that I would find one. I began reading. One week I checked out a whole stack of books about homosexuality

and lesbianism, read them, and decided that, no, that didn't sound like me, and kept on looking.

My summer's reading turned out to be significant to my brother Rick, however—a fact which I only discovered many years after the fact. As usual, Rick had finished his library books the same week I'd been investigating homosexuality and had gone looking for books in my room. He must not have been able to find them right away, because I'd concealed them in the closet. But he eventually located the books and was stunned by his discovery. Though two years younger than me, Rick had been agonizing for a long while about his own sexuality. Unlike me, he harbored no doubts about whether or not he had any, but was dealing with a lot of guilt because he suspected that he was gay. He'd been talking about becoming a priest, hoping to avoid the whole dilemma. When he found the books I'd been reading, he leapt to the conclusion that he and I shared this secret orientation.

He soon confided in me and I, in turn, confided in him—though my confidences didn't include the kind of information he expected to hear. My reading did at least make me a sympathetic listener. From then on, Rick and I were always close, even though we would eventually live 2000 miles away from one another. He attended Stanford University, bought a house with his lover in San Francisco, earned his living as a cabinetmaker and built beautiful furniture.

It was a piece of Rick's furniture, in fact, that catalyzed Scott's and my trip to San Francisco...



A Mistake, a Legacy

Rick was a perfectionist in his work. "Why measure 5 times when you'll be all the more sure if you measure 7 times," was his professional slogan. Once, he

helped me sand and stain a small, wooden stool. I remember marveling at his seemingly infinite patience and the obvious joy he poured into the simple act of sanding wood. He guided my hand, murmuring, "with the grain ... slow ... easy ... with the grain..." As a result, the lines of his designs and the feel of his furniture were always wondrously precise and elegant. As a gift to me one Christmas, he built a bookshelf out of elm, which is a terribly difficult wood to plane because of its tangled grain. Cutting smooth, straight lines in elm confounds most woodworkers.

By designing the bookshelf so that it could be assembled upon his arrival in Wisconsin, he was able to pack it into a compact, padded box and send it along on the plane with the rest of his luggage. After I'd opened the box, and the family had admired the buttery glow of the wood and exclaimed over the smooth finish of the shelves, Rick sat cross-legged on the floor and—without tools—assembled the shelves. He worried that the pressure changes might have caused the wood to expand or contract unevenly, but the shelves slid smoothly, snugly into their dovetailed slots, not even a sliver of light visible between the joins. Within minutes, magically, the shelf stood complete on my living room floor. My youngest brother Dan, who was that year enrolled in a high school shop class, mumbled something that included the word "impossible."

So you can understand why Rick's Big Cabinetmaking Mistake has achieved something of a mythic status in our family.

Rick had been commissioned to design and build all the furnishings for a wealthy client's penthouse. The client was a collector of some sort and to house that collection, wanted all the walls of his home entirely lined with low, open, three-shelfed, walnut cabinets, so that they would seem to curve around corners and flow from room to room. Rick measured the spaces carefully (over and over and over again), and constructed the many dozen pieces in his workshop during the next year. Then, one at a time, he wrapped each cabinet in blankets, hauled it over to the penthouse, and installed it. Like those elm dovetailed shelves he gave to me, each of the walnut cabinets slid seamlessly alongside the next, perfectly filling each space...all except one, that is. This was a stand-alone piece intended to nestle within the 6-foot space between two closet doors. Unhappily, it extended several inches beyond the wall, blocking a closet door. Rick was horribly embarrassed, but simply loaded the cabinet back onto his trailer, took it home, and built a new one for the client.

The mis-measured cabinet was pushed into a corner in his workshop, covered with an old sheet and as the years passed, gradually disappeared beneath scraps of wood and boxes of personal flotsam. By the time Rick's illness began to affect his muscle control and coordination so that he could no longer operate his equipment, the cabinet was almost completely forgotten. After Rick died, his lover, Danny Field, offered the piece to me if I could transport it back to Wisconsin, and I gladly accepted, pleased at the thought that I would own another beautiful piece of furniture built by my brother.

However it took a couple years before Scott and I finally figured out an affordable way to get the cabinet to Wisconsin. We drove out to California late in July, rented a U-Haul trailer in San Francisco, and after four days with Danny, (and with Spike Parsons and Tom Becker too), drove back home with the cabinet.

The day after we returned, I found myself working on a woodworking project of my own and thinking about Rick. Scott and I had recently purchased a CD shelf made of unstained, inexpensive pine. Still, it was a nice piece, the shelves dovetailed into the sides; all it needed was a little more sanding and a careful stain job. I reflected on the things I had learned to appreciate from Rick as I sanded the wood, hearing his voice in my mind, still patient, coaching, "with the grain ... slow ... easy ... with the grain..."

A Detour

I never lost track of fandom entirely. I continued to work on WisCons and attend other cons; I attended many Wednesday night meetings, and never fell off the trade list of many fanzines. Nevertheless, I feel as though I've been away. My attention was focused on different things for several years: my family, setting up a house and a household with Scott Custis, my work as a computer graphic artist.

Tuesday morning, Scott and I left I-80 in Wyoming and took a left onto U.S. Highway 191, traveling south into Utah and around the 100-mile-long, Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area, which is a lake formed by the damned up tail of the Green



River. Flaming Gorge looks like a sort of miniature version of the Grand Canyon as it would have looked if the Army Corps of Engineers had gotten its way a few decades ago. In fact, if you raft down the Green River (which is damned up near the town of Dutch John, Utah) south through Desolation, Cataract, Glen, and Marble Canyons—about 300 miles through Utah and into Arizona—and survive the wild river trip, you'd eventually career into the Grand Canyon itself. We didn't detour quite that far; we figured we could only spare an afternoon from our tightly scheduled route.

But detours lead to detours; that's life. We refused to curtail our exploration of that beautiful place, even though we soon realized that we were adding an entire day, not just an afternoon, onto our trip. At sunset we stood high on a cliff near the southern shore of Flaming Gorge Reservoir, gazing north into the blazing red cliffs which give the place its name, and the sparkling, blue waters that fill it. Desert scrub vegetation covered the cliffs to the east and pine forests blanketed the western cliffs. A single, tiny speck of a boat lazily pulled a water skier in spiral patterns across the surface far below us. It was one of the only two boats we saw that day. Hundreds of feet below, we noticed a single, isolated, empty campsite, accessible only to boats. It was an awesomely beautiful vista and Scott and I vowed that we'd come back some day and spend a week or more leisurely exploring some of the hundreds of miles of hiking trails, the gigantic, seemingly empty lake and that little isolated campsite on the shore.

When we finally rolled into the Bay Area Wednesday afternoon instead of Tuesday night, as planned, we found a very hungry Pat Murphy at the Exploratorium. We'd arranged to meet her for lunch and had called the night before from Reno and then Wednesday noon from Sacramento to tell her that we were running late.

"You're in Sacramento?" she said. "You should be able to get into the city within an hour."

"Well, let's make it an hour and a half for us out-of-towners," I suggested.

We got back on the road, and passed a road sign that informed us that San Francisco was 75 miles ahead. "Wow, that Pat's a fast woman," commented Scott.

Indeed, Pat had underestimated the time required to drive from Sacramento to San Francisco and apologized when we arrived two and a half hours later. The Bay Bridge trapped us in its mid-day traffic snarl and at that point Scott and I decided to avoid exploring the real thing—rush-hour, freeway traffic—at all costs. Small town Midwesterners might not survive such a thing, we feared. We also discovered that San Francisco signs are designed with a different philosophy than Midwest city signs. We're used to patient, Wisconsin signs that say, "Your turn-off is coming up pretty soon, be alert, it's coming up just a half mile from here. Here it comes. Are you ready? Slow down; here it is..." San Francisco signs work like this: "Turn right HERE NOW for the Exploratorium. Didn't make it? Too bad. You're on your way to the Golden Gate Bridge. Last exit is HERE NOW. Last chance to get off." And woosh, we escape South onto Highway 1 through a sudden tunnel and look for a left turn so we can try again and promise to think faster, less Midwestern. But the next sign says, "No left turn for 7 miles. Ha!"

Lunch with Pat on the shady back porch of a restaurant relaxed us. Pat and I exchanged information about Tiptree Award fund-raising, a road sign along my own private fannish detour that I've been traveling since Pat's Guest of Honor speech at the 1991 WisCon.



Getting Back: Knee Deep

WisCon 15 in 1990 continued what Scott's and my apazine, *Union Street*, had begun: tempting me deeper and deeper back into the fannish stream.

Programming chair, Lorelei Manney put me on several panels with Pat Murphy and Pamela Sargent, which gave me the excuse to re-read Sargent's *Women of Wonder* series and to buy a stack of books at A Room of One's Own, our local feminist bookstore. Before WisCon, I read Pat Murphy's two novels, *The Falling Woman* and *The City, Not Long After*, and began her anthology, *Points of Departure*. Ursula Le Guin's novel, *Tehanu* and her collection of essays, *Dancing at the Edge of the World* found their way into my ROOO book bag too, and by the end of February, I was bubbling with excitement with the sense that SF written by women was heading off into new exciting directions. (I'd been out of touch, you see, with both fandom and SF in general.) I picked up a few Sherri Tepper's books, reading for the first time, *Gate to Women's Country* and re-reading parts of Le Guin's *Always Coming Home*, which I had loved the first time I read it, but now seemed to connect on lots of levels with the other books on my list. It seemed to me that these writers were discarding the notion that women's lives and experiences are of less intrinsic interest and importance. Ursula Le Guin wrote in "The Fisherman's Daughter" (in *Dancing at the Edge of the World*):

It seems to me a pity that...the conventions...exist to protect men from being shocked, still admit only male experience of women's bodies, passions and existence. It seems to me a pity that so many women, including myself have accepted this denial of their own experience and narrowed their perception to fit it, writing as if their sexuality were limited to copulation, as if they knew nothing about pregnancy, birth, nursing, mothering, puberty, menstruation, menopause, except what men are willing to hear, nothing except what men are willing to hear about housework, childwork, lifework, war, peace, living and dying as experienced in the female body and mind and imagination....

My book Always Coming Home was a rash attempt to imagine such a world, where the Hero and the Warrior are a stage adolescents go through on their way to becoming responsible human beings where the parent-child relationship is not forever viewed through the child's eyes but includes the reality of the mother's experience.

I read more, I started jotting down notes, and my excitement grew.

A couple years before, it had seemed to me that feminist SF had gone into hiding and was being discouraged by editors arguing that anything labeled feminist SF would not sell. I was getting angry at the frequently voiced phrase, "I'm not a feminist, but..." The local newspaper published a nationally syndicated article by a woman advising us to abandon the word "feminist" because she said it now meant "man-hating," and I fired off an angry letter to the editor. And then of course, the evening news hasn't exactly been providing inspiring counterpoint.



In 1989, the same year Rick died, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the state of Missouri in the case, *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, which argued that life begins at conception and would prevent state funded health care providers from counseling, referring or performing abortions. Suddenly I found my life tangled with personal and public horrors. It was impossible to sit still through the evening news, impossible to read a newspaper, impossible even to talk about what was going on, without crying out in frustration and anger. I had to do something or I would have cracked up. So I joined the Reproductive Rights Coalition, which itself soon joined a local coalition of groups after the Supreme Court agreed to hear the Webster case. The coalition was called DARE—Defend Abortion Rights Emergency—and it organized marches, defended health clinics and (at my insistence) published a newsletter which bore a strange resemblance to a fanzine. I edited and illustrated the newsletter, designed posters and signs. I marched and guarded clinics.

And since then, it's only gotten worse. Limited abortion may still be technically legal in the US, but it's getting more and more difficult for many women to actually find clinics willing to perform them. Several members of SF went to Milwaukee this summer to help defend the clinics against the same folks who closed down Wichita, Kansas clinics earlier in the year. Feeding upon the fear of AIDS, the right-wing has targeted homosexuals as the 1992 campaign's Willie Horton. We hear many calls for censorship. Religious groups are showing more interest in governing than counseling, and *The Handmaid's Tale* is beginning to read less like fiction than fact. The various Supreme Court appointments brought home to us all how the rest of our lives will be affected by the last couple administrations; the Thomas/Hill confrontation cast a similar sort of spotlight on the impact of a Congress comprised almost entirely of white men.

I never have been able to keep my politics out of my fanish writing, nor would I ever want to do so. The chance to mix politics and personal writing tempted me to join fandom in the first place back in the early 1970s when women writers were revolutionizing SF and attracting women readers and fans to a field that promised an exciting stage on which to play-act feminist dreams. The phrase from Monique Wittig's *Les Guerilleres* still raises goose bumps on my skin: "Failing that..." she says—meaning that if you do not find stories of strong women in your life or in history, "Failing that—invent." That, to me, has always encapsulated the thrill and value of speculative fiction. It's the engine that drove me to devote enormous chunks of my life to *Janus* and *Aurora*. And it's the side road that tempted me down a new detour into fanish activity.

Pat Murphy finished her dinner and strode up to the podium at the WisCon 15 banquet and began to lay the groundwork for the bombshell she would momentarily explode among the conventioners already excited by a day's remarkable events. Several of us had been happily comparing this WisCon to WisCons 1, 2, and 3, at which feminist discussion had first ignited a town's fangroup and instigated a decade of passionate sercon activity. We praised Lorelei Manney, the programming chair, for having encouraged conversations like those at early WisCons, at which one panel seemed to flow into the next—the discussion gaining momentum and substance as the day progressed. The meta-topic of WisCon 15 involved the different perspective that women writers bring to the field of SF and the necessity to remember and preserve the achievements of previous women writers. Both Pamela Sargent's and Pat Murphy's speeches continued that conversation with wonderful synchronicity, causing some of us to speculate that they had used a time machine to freeze time in the

hour before the banquet so that they could re-write speeches that blended into and commented upon the day's discussion. It would have been a thrilling evening even if Pat hadn't made her final announcement.

Pat started it off with a light-hearted description of her fantasy of a women's science fiction award, "just to make trouble."

But a few weeks later, I had dinner with Karen Fowler and I mentioned this joke. Karen is also a trouble-maker, but a very thoughtful one. She looked thoughtful and said, "You know, there is no science fiction award named after a woman."

*Let's see: we have the Hugo (for Hugo Gernsback), the Theodore Sturgeon Award, the John W. Campbell Award, the Arthur C. Clarke Award, and of course the Philip K. Dick Award. No women. *Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley, has been called the first science fiction novel, but there is no Mary Shelley Award.*

And then Karen, who tends toward brilliance, said, "What about James Tiptree, Jr.? And it seemed like such a perfect idea. James Tiptree, Jr., winner of multiple Nebulas. Revealed in mid-career as Alice Sheldon, and forever after, in every introduction, revealed as Alice Sheldon. James Tiptree, Jr., who helped break down the imaginary barrier between "women's writing" and "men's writing." James Tiptree, Jr., author of "The Women Men Don't See."

...And so I would like to announce the creation of the James Tiptree, Jr. Award, to be presented annually to a fictional work that explores and expands the roles of women and men. We're still in the planning stages, but we plan to appoint a panel of five judges and we plan to finance the award—and this is another stroke of genius on Karen's part—through bake sales. (If you want to volunteer to run a bake sale, talk to me after the speech.)

The crowd rose and cheered and clapped and laughed for a long, long time. And then Pat was deluged with offers of help. I thought briefly of my first Madstf meeting when the prospect of publishing a small press zine drew that fateful phrase from my lips, "I'll help..." and led directly to twelve years of *Janus/Aurora* publishing and 15 WisCons. But that didn't slow me down a bit. I joined the crowd around Pat complimenting her on the speech and asked her if we could reprint it, "...maybe as part of a cookbook." By the end of the evening, Laura Spiess came up with the inspired title, *The Bakery Men Don't See* and we began to solicit recipes.

A bake sale was organized for Minicon and the fund-raising movement cascaded into independent life. Even Pat expresses surprise at how successful it's all been. We presented the Tiptree fund with a check for \$1800 of cookbook proceeds at WisCon 16, just before the first Tiptree Awards were presented to Gwyneth Jones (for *White Queen*) and Eleanor Arnason (for *A Woman of the Iron People*). In addition to the hugely successful cookbook—now Hugo-nominated—bakery sales approached \$1000, so the fund was easily able to afford travel and accommodations for both authors at WisCon 16 and to provide them with honorariums of \$500 each, not to mention edible typewriter award/plaques, cast in pure milk chocolate.

For the better part of six months, 20 megs of memory on my computer hard disk at work was crammed with recipes, layouts, artwork, a How-to-Do-a-Bake-Sale brochure, posters, letters and recommendation forms as we worked on the cookbook, coordi-



nated bake sale ads, and got the news out about the award. In the midst of *Bakery*, I seem to remember Diane Martin and myself saying something to the effect of "Never Again. One cookbook is enough." In spite of that flash of temporary sanity, we're off again, with a main course recipe book, this time honoring the Tiptree short story, "Her Smoke Rose Up Forever." We're going to call it, *Her Smoke Rose Up From Supper* and hope to have it out by WisCon 17 at which the second Tiptree Award ceremony will take place.

Mundane life weaves into fannish life; fannish activity blends into political awareness. The detour merges with the main route.



Detours Lead to Detours: Waist Deep

Before he and Carrie Root moved to Seattle, Andy Hooper convinced Madison fandom that our time had come, that we must host a Corflu in 1993 for its tenth anniversary. It sounded like a good idea, so we said OK, and began at once the important business of naming committee members after Wisconsin state symbols. At Bill—"State Muffin, Cranberry"—Bodden's half-baked suggestion, I accepted the title, "State Fossil, Trilobite" and have begun chronicling the Precondian days of the Madison SF group. Inspired by deeply rooted reasons, Steve Swartz cultivates himself as "State Soil, Antigo Loam." Hooper reeled in the "State Fish, Muskellunge" for his trophy; Tracy Shannon arranged to be known as "State Flower, Wood Violet;" Ellen Franklin picked out "State Mineral, Galena;" and Jim Hudson lucked out with his title, "State Lottery," apropos for the person in charge of the cash, we all thought. Fun and games, for sure, but just when I thought this would be something completely different, the State Muskellunge started talking to us about the Corflu publication.

"What should we publish?" we asked one another.

"Something we really care about. Something we're willing to lavish a lot of time on..." was the general consensus.

I'd been working on the Tiptree stuff all year and had been thinking on and off about Jeff Smith's old fanzine, *Khatru*, which, in 1975, published a symposium on women and SF. It was a really remarkable zine because its list of contributors included some of the most well-known writers (plus an agent) of 70s feminist SF: Vonda D. McIntyre, Ursula K. Le Guin, Virginia Kidd, Suzy McKee Charnas, Kate Wilhelm, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, Samuel Delany, Joanna Russ, Raylyn Moor, Luise White ... and James Tiptree, Jr. Since the symposium's participants at the time were unaware that Tiptree was a woman, there are several exchanges that are amusing in retrospect, but the most exhilarating thing I found upon re-reading *Khatru* #3-4 was the feeling that I was glimpsing some of my favorite writers in the very process of developing ideas that were already or would eventually become central in their work. And it seems to me, that the part of fannishness that is about readers making connections with science fiction writers—the thing that joins writers and fans within an interactive community—is the thing that this *Khatru* symposium did best.

We all get involved in fandom for different reasons, and the major Corflu publications have reflected them. We have reprinted fannish writings and illustrations, because for many of us, the essays and art created and distributed within the amateur press make up the best of what we are and do. Cincinnati published a live fanzine, because for that group of fans, the process of interacting at a convention and within a fanzine defines the essence of fandom. When I think of what got me involved in fandom, and what galvanized the energy of our early Madison group, it seems to me that our motivation had to do with being a part of an active feedback loop between authors and readers. We reviewed a pre-publication copy of Suzy Charnas's *Motherlines* in *Janus*, along with dozens of new feminist SF stories and novels that came out during the 70s. Authors wrote to us. We wrote back. We invited them to WisCon as guests; we engaged them in discussion as they engaged us in the ongoing conversation. We felt as though we were part of the gender-role revolution going on in science fiction publishing, not just onlookers.

Few other literary genres can point to a phenomenon like this in which fans organize and join in conversation with some of the most important writers in the field and gets them talking about where the genre is going. When you think about it, this is really an amazing thing. It's a thing worth celebrating with a Corflu publication, especially considering the fact that this Corflu is going to take place in Madison, Wisconsin...

So we're reprinting the *Khatru* symposium and inviting the participants to update their comments for the new edition.

And suddenly I'm involved in another cookbook project (*Her Smoke Rose Up From Supper*) and the *Khatru* reprinting. I've been invited to Reinconation the week after worldcon, am wondering about a speech topic, and I've been promising people that there will be an issue of *Whimsey* out in time for Magicon. I've dived head first into the surf. I'm in over my head—no, not drowning—in fact, I'm eagerly reaching out and scooping more water toward me, stroking happily through the waves.

You're All Wet

After lunch with Pat Murphy, Scott and I temporarily abandoned our car in the Exploratorium parking lot, and caught a bus downtown to a little brew pub on Columbus Avenue where we met Spike Parsons. Spike lived in Madison when I first met her, but she now lives in the Bay Area with her husband, Tom Becker. Since she is both a good friend of Scott and I, as well as Scott's cousin, there was lots of catching up to do.

I first met Spike in the YWCA weight room during a lunch hour workout. We soon discovered that we both worked in the same office building and shared an employer. One day, Spike was doing wrist curls with free weights and I was straining to finish 30 reps on the bench press when, strangely enough, our conversation wandered to the subject of Amazons. It turned out that Spike had just read Jessica Amanda Salmonson's anthology, *Amazons!*, and by an amazing coincidence, Salmonson was scheduled to be one of WisCon's next guests of honor. That news tempted Spike to become involved with SF² where her boundless enthusiasm and endearing tendency to volunteer for everything, quickly admitted her into the core group. Eventually she took on a major role in



WisCon-planning and for several years edited *Cube*—the group's newsletter—through its most regular and productive era.

Even though Spike read very little SF, she never balked at calling herself a fan. Spike is no shrinking violet and it only took a few introductions before she was welcomed by the fan community. Soon she was beginning plans for her own fanzine, *I-90*, and offering to work for other fan group's conventions. Since she left Madison to join Bay Area fandom, we've missed her a lot.

Luckily, the Law of Conservation of Fannishness has been working in our favor recently. Although we lost not only Spike, but Andy Hooper and Carrie Root too, we've gained Steve Swartz and Elspeth Krisor from Washington DC, and will soon help Joan Vinge, Jim Frenkle and their kids unpack their truck from New York. Steve and Elspeth (or Elk—as she prefers to be called—a contraction of her first and last names) are temporarily living with Scott and I for two weeks between the end of their last home's lease and the beginning of their new home's mortgage.

Those of you on *Cube*'s mailing list have already met (in print) its new wacky editor, Steve Swartz. (But if you haven't seen an issue, you should try to get on the mailing list because Steve is transforming *Cube* into an interesting genzine.) Steve enthusiastically calls himself a fan; his wife, Elk, emphatically does not. So, as I introduce her, you must excuse me if I repeatedly remind myself, and you, of that fact: Elk is no fan.

If she were a fan, I would first describe her as a book-lover extraordinaire. Instead, I should say that she works full time as a computer programmer/consultant, but has eagerly sought out and accepted a second, part-time job at the bookstore, A Room of One's Own, where she regularly spends her entire paycheck on new books. The image which comes to my mind when I think of Elk, is of a tall, thin woman, wearing comfortable, oversize clothing, gracefully sitting cross-legged on the floor or the grass, her cat curled on her lap. With one hand Elk strokes Kate, with the other she holds a book open.

Elk contributed an article in the last issue of *Cube*, reviewing some of the books considered for the 1992 Tiptree award. But Elk is not a fan. She was just interested in the Tiptree award for literary and political reasons, and if she continues to help out by looking for a library in which to house the Tiptree collection, and works on a new cookbook (for non-cooks) to help with fund-raising, and maybe even organizes a quilting bee for the Tiptree award, that has nothing to do with being a fan. Her husband was editing *Cube* and she was just helping out. She helped out more by proofreading *Cube* and by picking up SF mail when Steve was out of town. If it weren't for Steve, she assures me, she would have done none of this work. Elk's not a fan.

She attends the Madison group's Wednesday night meetings regularly. Even as I write, Scott and Elk are leaving the house for a meeting. I begged off because I needed more time to work on *Whimsey*, and Steve Swartz didn't go with them either, because he was out of town on a business trip. But Scott and Elk didn't want to miss the chance to schmooze with friends at the Brat und Brau, the local restaurant/bar where SF holds its weekly meetings. The fact that these Wednesday friends of Scott's and Elk's are all fans doesn't mean that Elk is a fan. She does not consider fannishness to be contagious. The mere fact that almost all her friends in Madison are fans and that she socializes more often with fans than with anyone else is irrelevant; she's not a fan.

And of course it's understandable that since so many of her friends in Madison belong to *The Turbo-Charged Party Animal* that Elk occasionally likes to read Steve's copy of the apa. A few nights ago, in fact, she eagerly scanned the newest issue before I

got a chance to look at it. She pointed out a particularly juicy bit of news and we gossiped about it for a half hour. Gossiping about fans, of course, is the ultimate signifier of membership in the fannish community... uh... I mean that's what it *sometimes* means. Not in this case, of course. Elk is no fan. Sometimes she helps collate the apa, but that's just because she happens to be around or because Tracy Shannon, the OE, has made a dessert for the occasion and Elk has a sweet tooth, that's all.

The fact that she asked to read all the *Janus* and *Aurora* back issues was no indication of wakening interest in fanzines. She was just showing an interest in the work of some of her friends. Elk sees her behavior as that of a friend, not a fan, and I'm sure we can all understand that.

It was funny, though, that one Wednesday night, when the new guy walked in and sat down near Elk and asked her some questions. A few moments later, I was leaning back in my chair, grinning, as Elk graciously and expertly explained who we were, described the group's activities, and offered to put him on the *Cube* mailing list. And there was the Saturday morning when a bunch of us happened to start talking with this really interesting woman at the farmer's market after Elk happened to notice that she was reading Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*. Unaware that she was conversing with a large contingent representation from WisCon, the feminist convention, (plus Elk, of course), this woman unwittingly sighed, "It's too bad there's not more SF written by women..." and had to hold on to her seat when we all tried to answer her at once. I seem to recall Elk jotting down a few titles and later saying that she hoped the woman would come to the next WisCon. It's just a coincidence that Elk reads SF and fantasy and it's just a coincidence that once in a while she likes to talk about it with other people who read SF and fantasy. It apparently doesn't mean that Elk is a fan.

Earlier this year, Steve Swartz convinced SF to invest in a mimeograph and electrostensiler. He volunteered the house he shares with Elk and Bill Bodden to house the new machinery. And Elk ended up helping on that enterprise too, not of course in the actual running off of fanzines on the mimeograph. Not anything as fannish of that, no way. But the day the mimeo paper was delivered to their house, Steve happened to be out of town, and Elk volunteered to meet the truck. Wanting to witness the fannish event of the month, "Mimeograph Paper Arrives in Madison," I joined Elk. We sat in the living room waiting for the delivery truck and I asked her how much paper Steve had ordered.

"Quite a lot, I think," she answered. Just then a very, very long semitruck pulled up to the curb.

"How much is 'quite a lot'?" I asked. Elk had her back to the window through which I was staring, appalled.

Well, there turned out to be less than I feared, but we were glad to accept the truck driver's offer to unload the boxes. It took him a half hour to move them upstairs to the mimeo/computer room and he stopped for a few breaks between hauls.

"What are you going to do with all this paper," he asked curiously. This sort of delivery to a private residence was obviously not a usual event for him.

I began to frame the explaining-fanzines-to-a-mundane-answer, when Elk jumped in and enthusiastically began to brief the guy on amateur publishing. Suddenly she paused when she heard me laughing, and hastily added something to the effect that this sort of thing was done by "other people," not her.

Elk avoids Worldcons, and other big, crowded conventions. She likes WisCon, however, and has told me that she has gone to a few other conventions too. She had hoped to attend

Reinconation too, because a lot of her friends will be there, and maybe partially because I'll be a Goh. And I guess *that* doesn't make her a fan either.

But now I'm getting really confused. Because if you eliminate the reasons that Elk says prove she's not a fan, it would be hard to find ones that would prove me a fan.

Well, that's not true.

I do not doubt that I am a fan. Fandom, as a perspective, a set of skills, a community of friends, and a style, has infiltrated my life. It is one of the lenses through which I see my life. ... Well, I am a visual person and I tend to use images to explain and understand. The image that fits my understanding of fandom these days is the river in James Tiptree, Jr.'s end-of-the-world story, "Slow Music," a great, ghostly river which sucks up people's souls.

The River-focus became more and more awesome as they approached. They could trace it towering up and up now, twisting gently as it passed beyond the sky. A tendril of the immaterial stream of sidereal sentience that had embraced Earth, a pathway to immortal life. The air inside looked no longer golden, but pale silver-gilt, like a great shaft of moonlight coming down through the morning sun. Objects at its base appeared very clear but shimmering, as if seen through cool crystal water.

Once captured by the river in Tiptree's story, a person forevermore sees the real world only through its glittering veils, and gradually loses the ability or motivation to escape its currents. If you remember the story, let me hasten to explain that I do not consider the river a perfect metaphor for fandom, especially the part of the story about the river destroying humanity. But I do like the image. I feel that I will always swim in (and sometimes wade in, or even sun bathe along the beach of) fandom.

One of the parts I liked best in *Beyond the Enchanted Duplicator* ... *To the Enchanted Convention* (By Walt Willis and James White) was the chapter in which Jophan puts his fannish skills to use in his mundane job as supermarket supervisor.

One of the things on his mind had been the impersonality of supermarkets. They were a good idea for quick one-stop shopping, which was what most people wanted, but he was quite sure there was a sizable number of people who missed the corner shop, where you could get information and advice, and perhaps local gossip. It was already the practice in Jophan's store to attach little cards to some merchandise, with information like FRESH TODAY or GREAT VALUE, and Jophan used his little dot matrix printer to extend greatly the scope of these. Sometimes it was the place of origin, for imported fruit and vegetables or information about the length of the season in the case of local produce. Sometimes it was simply the price per kilo, where competing brands of the same product were being offered in different sizes of containers. In the case of the new foodstuffs he had introduced, he offered simple recipes.

When he was typing one of these out on his word processor, the thought came to him that there was now only one facility of the corner shop he was not providing, namely gossip. He took out the notebook on which he had jotted down the overheard remarks of customers and began adding them between two lines at the foot of his cards, like a fanzine interlineation.

The supermarket's profits skyrocket as a result of Jophan's innovations, and Jophan gets promoted to a position that requires a great deal of travel and allows him to continue on his quest for the enchanted convention. I like the idea that when we follow our hearts or our careers into the mundane wilderness, that we don't leave fandom behind; we carry it with us, like a pair of glasses through which daily life gets translated into a fannish story, and where we urge our friends to join us for a dip into the fannish stream. "Come on in, the water's fine!"

Everyday Life



After a fine Italian meal—of which I remember best a divine plate of deep fried calamari—Spike and Tom drove us back to the Exploratorium where we reclaimed our car and followed them back across the Bay Bridge and south through the MacArthur Maze to their home in Haywood. We slept and the next morning, after another delightful meal, Tom led us on an exhausting but wonderfully rewarding hike over the hills behind

Muir Beach. Later we walked through part of Muir Woods and took the dizzying car ride up to see the gorgeous view of the northern Bay from the top of Mount Tam. Early in the evening, Spike and Tom dropped us off at the house my brother Rick used to share with Danny Field and we said good-bye till Friday evening, when there would be a party in Haywood.

Danny, Scott, and I went out for dinner that night and talked for hours. Along the way, we discussed the logistics of moving Rick's cabinet from the downstairs garage/workshop. The next day, Friday, we would pick up the trailer that Scott had already reserved. Danny suggested we store the trailer in the garage until we left Sunday morning. Since Danny would be working all day Friday, we would then take BART back to Hayward, and relax until Spike and Tom returned from work. Perhaps we would have lunch with Debbie Notkin. It all seemed very simple.

"Let's get the trailer business out of the way first," said Scott the next morning. "We can have breakfast afterwards," said the man who never misses breakfast.

Right away, things got more complex. Before we could pick up the trailer, we realized that we had to return to Hayward for our car. My estimate of an hour BART trip turned out to be reasonably accurate, but I forgot to factor in the half hour bus trip it takes to get to BART, not to mention the half-hour walk to Spike and Tom's house, although, we called a cab for that. And of course it took longer to drive back to the city than it took to leave it via mass transit. The slow-moving lines at the toll booths accounted for some of the problem. "God, I'm hungry," said Scott as we waited.

The U-Haul parking lot resembled that of a miniature shopping mall the day after Thanksgiving, if you can imagine one that has had all its parking space lines erased from the asphalt by anarchist vandals. What a mess it was. We were both cursing by the time an angry truck driver ordered some kids to move their van from its parking space smack dab in front of the drive into the lot. I held the city map a few inches from my face carefully plotting out the most direct route back to Danny's house. Above all, we wanted to avoid a situation that required us to back up the trailer. Neither of us were sure we could carry off that maneuver in heavy traffic. Let me amend

that, **Scott** wasn't sure. I knew I'd have to abandon the vehicle first. That's why I was navigating at this stage, and Scott was driving.

"The U-Haul guy said that we can get across Market easily on this street," I reassured Scott. "And then it's only a few blocks more. Easy." That's when we discovered the road construction on Market Street. Well we managed, finally, to get to Danny's without having to back up the trailer. "I'm really hungry," said Scott. "How about that little coffee shop on Haight Street we went to last time? I can just taste those sweetrolls..."

That's when things really got complicated. It turned out that the trailer was too high to fit into Danny's garage. Danny and Rick did a beautiful job renovating their little Victorian house and the neighborhood's buildings show more evidence of improvement every time I visit, but still, this is not an area in which we felt comfortable about leaving a rental trailer parked on the street. Suddenly it was clear that it would be necessary to load the bureau onto the trailer and to drive it back to Hayward that morning... or... I mean, that afternoon. We managed to park the car across the street from Danny's house, load the bureau onto the trailer, and then drag it by hand across the street and attach it to the car in an hour or so. Scott got yelled at by a guy who was trying to get to work, and the trailer only rolled away once and we rescued it before it crashed into anything.

But the drive back to Hayward was a long one. Scott's empty stomach put him in an ornery mood. We went out for a late lunch about three in the afternoon.

That turned out to be the only difficult part of the trip. Debbie Notkin and Alan Bostick introduced us to their apartment in Berkeley for a delicious stir-fried dinner. Joanne Bowman joined us and regaled us with TAFF stories. Later in the evening we returned to Spike and Tom's for the party—which was a pretty wonderful thing for them to do for us, since our short stay in the Bay Area hadn't allowed very much time for visiting with friends. And we had a great evening visiting. We gossiped and told stories about our trip and one thing led to another. Road trips stories led to road kill stories, and I remembered the morning of the squirrels...



Sense of Wonder in the Oddest Places

I'm no morning person, and the hours before 10 a.m. have a hallucinogenic quality to me; so I didn't find anything unusual in the behavior of the business-suited man who had stepped off the bus first and walked down the sidewalk ahead of me. He edged fearfully around a little squirrel as if he thought it was about to attack him.

It was a pretty morning. The lush green grass of the Capitol Square seemed to invite a bare-footed detour and the early morning sun sent shafts of golden light through the canopy of leaves, bouncing off the brilliantly colored flower beds along the sidewalks. It was a morning that encouraged dawdling and detours. I was enjoying the beautiful scene and the cool air, still damp with dew that would soon burn off with the heat of the day, and was only half-aware of the bizarre scene ahead. I laughed and then turned my gaze into the rustling leaves of the giant oak tree above my head.

A few minutes later, I strolled past the assertive rodent. Far from being a rare sight on the Capitol Square lawns, these little

rodents are so numerous that one can rarely gaze out across the grass without seeing four or five of them hunting fallen nuts or running up tree trunks, cheeks full. In fact, an unnaturally high population is maintained by Capitol Square groundskeepers who feed the squirrels, possibly in order to create the appropriate urban/bucolic ambiance. One can imagine squirrels telling their squirrel relatives living a few blocks away about the cushy deal they get on the Square:

"Yeah, on weekday lunch-hours, hundreds of office workers drop crumbs all over the grass, and somebody puts out hors d'oeuvres in between. It's the luxury cruise of Madison parks!" No wonder there seem to be more squirrels emigrating to the Square every day.

In spite of their burgeoning numbers, one still expects them to act properly shy of human movement. They're supposed to scamper away when a person moves toward them and when one fails to show the proper deference, as this one did, they no longer seem entirely cute and inoffensive. Suddenly one remembers stories of rabid squirrels. I scrutinized its tail for signs of thinning fur, its mouth for foam, but it was a pudgy, healthy squirrel with shiny eyes. Its eyes bothered me. The squirrel wasn't ignoring me because it lacked fear. In fact, it was staring at me and its muscles were visibly tense as if it were about to do something. Not only did the squirrel not flee as I approached, it took two steps toward me, still tense. I remembered a friend's sarcastic comment when someone said, "Aw, look at the cute little squirrel!" She answered, "Squirrels are nothing but big rats with furry tails." This squirrel definitely resembled a rat in drag at the moment and I gave it a wide berth, edging quickly to the far side of the sidewalk.

Suddenly the squirrel leapt onto my shoe and I felt its little claws scratch through my jeans!

The scene was probably an amusing one to anyone walking behind me: Tall, 5'9" woman walking along, visibly wary of little 10" squirrel. Suddenly, squirrel attaches itself to woman's foot and she hops around, screaming "get off me, get off me!", vigorously shaking her foot. Woman seems to punt squirrel across lawn. Squirrel flees up tree trunk. Woman runs across street.

I thought I'd fallen into some bizarre *Twilight Zone* episode, and the feeling of dread only increased as I rounded a corner and saw the bicycle racks (a metal contraption, 12 feet long, bolted into concrete) covered with an undulating carpet of squirrels. I jogged past the eerie scene, thought of Hitchcock's *The Birds*, and hurried into the office building where I work, my heart still pounding.

The elevator door opened, two women waited inside, and I joined them, turning toward the closing door. That's when it began to feel like the opening scene of a Stephen King novel.

One woman said, very seriously, to the other "Have you heard? They stopped feeding the squirrels!"



Going Home

Scott and I spent Saturday with Danny Field, went back to Hayward that night, and left for home

Sunday morning. We traveled slowly back to Wisconsin because the trailer's weight and wind resistance restricted our speed to an average of 50-55 mph. Traveling west we had averaged 65-70 mph. We had a scary moment in a mountain tunnel, but that's a story Scott likes to tell:



[Scott here—] Don't get me wrong. I have no complaints about Jeanne's driving. She's really a fine driver. I have enough faith in her skill that I often take naps, sometimes for hours, while she calmly persons the helm of the car. However, two driving situations have always caused her discomfort. She avoids driving at night because she distrusts her depth perception. The other situation involves bridges. The long steep bridges where you can't see the other side as you start across. She knows intellectually that the bridge extends to the other side, but she has to struggle with the nagging fear the when we reach the top, the road will disappear and we'll plunge off the end.

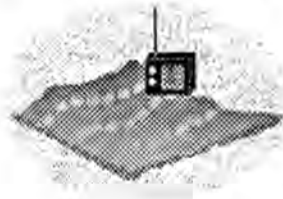
As we traveled west, we discovered that this latter fear transferred to a several new situations in the mountains. Jeanne found herself slowing down dramatically while descending steep mountain grades with sharp switchbacks, again fighting the fear that the road would suddenly end just out of sight around the curve. And then there were the tunnels.... I-80 has few tunnels, and Jeanne was behind the wheel for the only two tunnels on our route outside San Francisco. We could see through to the end of the first tunnel easily. I suggested she switch on the headlights. Although it looked dark as we approached, visibility inside the tunnel turned out to be excellent due to the lights that ran along both sides. It was so bright inside, we weren't sure our headlights were working and we anxiously checked them at our next gas stop.

We weren't so lucky on the return trip. We were cruising downhill at a respectable 60 mph, a good clip considering that we were dragging the trailer. Once again, we could see through to the other end of the tunnel. Once again as we drew near, it looked dark from our perspective in the bright morning sunshine. And this time, we weren't concerned because we "knew" the tunnels were illuminated. No need for headlights. We plunged into total darkness. No lights were installed in this tunnel. Instantly, the road, the walls, the ceiling, the earth itself disappeared. The blackness was broken only by a tiny bright coin of light at the far end of the tunnel that suddenly seemed to telescope away from us. Leaping up in our seats, we cried out in unison. I started yelling stupidly to turn on the headlights as Jeanne clawed the dash panel for the switch. The experience lasted only a few seconds, but for that short period, I understood Jeanne's fear of roads that disappear.

[Jeanne again—] Time slowed down considerably after that rush of adrenaline. In fact, time slowed down so much—due primarily to our plodding pace and frequent gas stops—that we found ourselves still driving through Nebraska at 4 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, the time we had expected to arrive in Wisconsin. We called ahead and warned Lillian and Tommy that we would not be joining them for dinner, and that we would see them in the morning.

We pulled into our driveway at about 2 am the next morning, and at a more civilized hour woke up, breakfasted with our two British guests and drove them out to a local beach, where we all enjoyed a relaxing afternoon. It was good to be home.

I met Lillian Edwards briefly during my TAFF trip in 1987, and then again in New Orleans at the 1988 worldcon, during Lillian's TAFF trip. As we sat on the beach together, soaking in the warm August sunshine, we commiserated about our TAFF trip reports.



Always Coming Home, Chapter Two, JG TAFF Trip 1987

Everything took more time and ended up weighing far more than we expected. In my mind, I compared my stuffed, leaden suitcase to the loosely packed duffelbag with which my brother Rick had traveled around the world, and sighed. On the other hand, I told myself and relished the memory: various women friends at work had reacted with stunned gasps of disbelief when I mentioned that I was planning to pack three weeks-worth of clothing into one large, carry-on, suitcase (plus a suitcase for TAFF auction material). In fact, at a Chicago workshop from which I'd just returned, several women each carried three or four pieces of luggage for that short, three-day session. Yeah, right, I said. This isn't so bad. And I felt a little better. I switched the focus of worry to the question of what I had forgotten. That occupied me for a while more, but then it was time to climb into the cab and catch the bus down to Chicago for our plane to England. Scott and I picked up our suitcases, glanced around the apartment one more time, and locked the door.

I had been in charge of logistics the last time Scott and I had flown to a con—to Austin for Armadillocon in Austin, Texas—and that time, we missed our flight because we took the wrong bus. This time, Scott took charge of the initial timetable and we arrived in Chicago early enough to dawdle over dinner and the Sunday papers before catching our flight. Avoiding the usual last-moment rush and gut-wrenching fears of arriving late was a nice change for me. I usually run just a bit late because I tend to try to finish whatever I'm doing first. We met Dick Russell and Diane Martin at the gate and their story provided a flash of déjà vu.

Apparently Dick had failed to take Diane seriously when she told him that they would have to leave soon and hadn't actually finished packing when the time came to depart. As a result, he forgot several essential items, including any American cash. A friend, Hank Luttrell, was dispatched back to the tree in a park where Dick had left his watch, meeting them between Madison and Chicago, where he handed the watch to Dick through the bus window. Dick entertained us by continuing to remember things he had forgotten to pack as we sat with him in the airport.

The plane ride was fairly uncomfortable due to the location of Scott's and my seat next to the kitchen, but I can only blame a growing case of nerves for my inability to sleep, since I'm usually able to sleep anywhere. Neither of us slept for more than an hour or was able to concentrate on a film, so we skipped the offered movie, *The Tin Men*. We passed on the airplane dinner too. The ice machine chunked away next to us, sounding like someone was thumping an iceberg with a blunt object at odd intervals. I read the latest issue of the Madison apa, *Turbo-Charged Party Animal* and by the time we landed in Heathrow, I'd finished it. How symbolic, I thought. I should put this in my TAFF report, how I finished with Madison fannish things just as we start on our UK adventure.

Apparently none of our group of Midwesterners matched the terrorist template, because the custom officials allowed us to breeze on past them, which relieved me, since I don't think I could easily have repacked my bulging suitcase. There was a bit of

confusion when we asked a clerk to change a pound note for the telephone, and suspected at first that we had been charged for the procedure. Greg Pickersgill later explained that 2-shilling coins equaled a 10 pence coin and cleared that up for us. We stood puzzling over the "play money" in our palms, and almost missed noticing Hope Kiefer's approach. At the time, Hope was living temporarily in London; she would return to her home in Madison later in the year.

Well, we didn't need to figure out this coin stuff right then; obviously there was no need to call anyone. I bent down, unzipped a suitcase pocket and handed Hope a copy of the *Turboapa*. "I came to England just to deliver your apazine, Hope," I said.

We waved at Greg and Linda Pickersgill and Pam Wells, and then Greg congratulated us for having recognized the "meeting place" sign. I looked up and around, feeling a bit like Alice in Wonderland and nodded, pretending competence. Hugs all around, laughter about the late arrival of our flight, and then we trudged off on a long walk to the underground, and eventually to Greg and Linda's house, where Scott and I would stay until we departed for Brighton and Seacon.

As I looked around at the faces of the other people in the tube car with us, I was very much aware that we Americans were playing out our typecast roles as boisterous, loud stereotypes. It was the first time on the trip that I felt myself to be an alien. But it certainly wasn't the last time. Later that day, as we walked to a restaurant, my attention was drawn over and over to the people we passed. There was something eccentric or bizarre about every single one of them. Any one of them, alone, walking down a Madison street would draw attention, although I couldn't have pointed out any specific style of clothing or mannerism that communicated that sense of difference to me. There was something disconcerting about everyone who passed me on the street: I kept trying to put two words together that were opposites: standardized eccentric. I had to keep reminding myself that I was the eccentric one, that all these people were at home, and looked and acted entirely normal for the place. The feeling would never wear off entirely during the three weeks of our visit, though its intrusiveness ebbed.

Greg said that Scott and I stood out as obviously American. Was it my backpack? Scott's jean jacket? Something about the way we moved? There didn't seem to be a huge difference in the way we dressed, not when you considered each garment, one at a time. Of course, people heard our American accents and would know, but even when we were silent, we were recognized. Toward the end of our trip, Scott and I were riding a train south to Redding on our way to visit the Langfords, and Scott made his way to the rest room down an aisle through a group of young, male partiers. One guy yelled at the top of his lungs and pointed directly at Scott, "American!" Scott returned stunned and confused, wondering how he had betrayed his nationality. We asked a few times what it was that marked us out as Americans, but no one could tell us. I connect it to that intangible alienness that I was so aware of that first day watching people I passed on the street: a mixture of lots of minute differences that cumulatively signal someone from another place.

"Whatever you do," warned Linda Pickersgill, "don't go on about the cute, little packages in the stores." Linda shared some of the lessons she'd learned the hard way during her own introduction to British society after moving there from the US. A Brit within earshot of an American exclaiming over the "cute" packages would probably categorize the speaker as a typical American, obsessed with bigness, wealth and over-indulgence. I figured it had more to do with the difference between American and Brit refrigerators. Every London home I visited had a very small fridge that fit below the counter space. Londoners tended to shop for the night's groceries on their way home, and are not able, as suburban Americans are able, to economize by shopping less often for larger quantities. They simply haven't got the space to store supplies for several weeks. But we made a mental note to avoid reinforcing this particular impression of "the ugly American."

We sat down for the first of many, many teas. Whenever we arrived at someone's home in the afternoon or evening, we were always offered tea. And always we were offered milk for our tea, which delighted me, because in the US, I am frequently ignored by restaurant servers when I ask for milk. (Usually I'm not even asked. They ask Scott if he wants cream with his coffee. He says no thank you; I kick him under the table, and he says, "I mean, yes. Yes, I do, thank you.") In Britain, that's the normal way to drink tea. In fact, tea and milk is considered one of life's basic necessities by most people. Even in Wisconsin, the "Dairy State," it's not unusual for a household made up entirely of adults to fail to stock milk. That situation seems far more unusual in Britain, where milk is purchased daily in small, (cute), rectangular $\frac{1}{2}$ pint containers. They are squared off at the top, without the pouring spout designed into wax box containers sold in the US, another effect of small UK refrigerators.

Our trip had begun.

Back in the US, five years later, I heat some water for a pot of tea. Tommy wakes up first and I greet him in the kitchen and we laugh about meeting someone for the first time when they wake up in your own house. Tommy says that he'd like to walk to the grocery store in order to get some milk for the tea, since we are almost out and I give him directions. Lillian has come down, and we're all sitting down for breakfast when Tommy returns.

"Is this for tea?" he asks, puzzled. He holds out a pint container of half-and-half.

"Sure, that's fine," I say, but Lillian is not convinced.

"What is this half-and-half?" she asks.

I explain to her that it is half whole milk and half whipping cream, and she wrinkles her nose and says that she would have preferred milk.

"I couldn't find plain milk," Tommy explains.

I think about telling him that it was the stuff in the humungous, plastic, arrogant American containers, but I just smile and say we'll get more later.

We are home. It's too bad that we have to be the sort of hosts that blow in, tired and exhausted, wake up and say to our guests, "Gee, it's too bad we don't have more time."

