

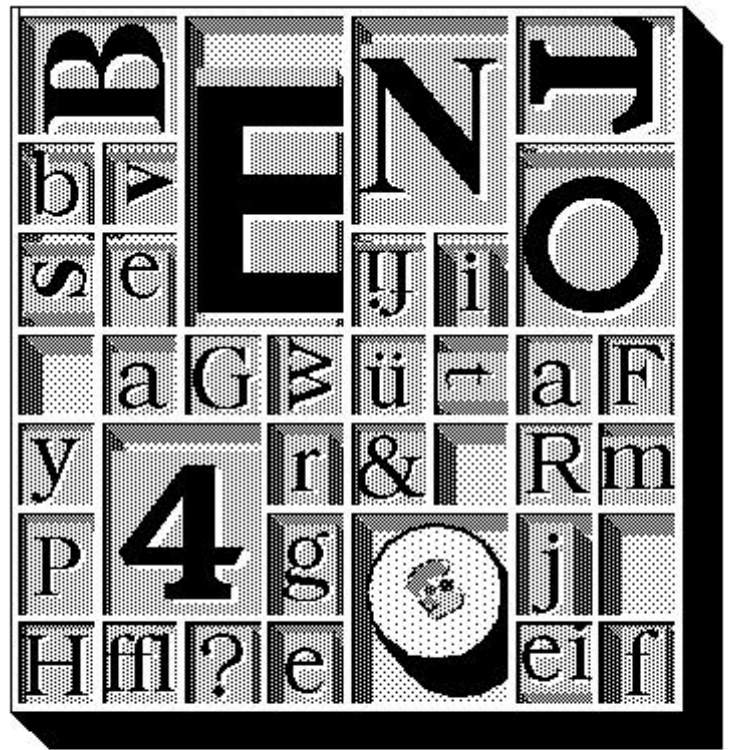
## SPECIAL OFFER

**FREE** to anyone locking by September 30th: the exciting Bento Press publication *Stuff and Nonsense*, Kate & David's wedding progress report. Formerly only available to a select, limited audience, it can now be yours! Read about the committee—GoH bios—Camcorder/Weapons Policy and more!

But wait! That's not all! You'll also receive *Time Travel Honeymoon*, as published in TAPS. Follow David and Kate through half a dozen decades in as many days! **Send your LoC or PoC TODAY!**

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- We'd like you to send a LoC or tradezine
- We ran into you at \_\_\_\_\_
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- You appear within
- Nepotism
- The Great Ghod Roscoe told us to in a vision
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



## Issue 4 — July 1992

A zine by David Levine & Kate Yule

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### Introduction

Welcome back to Bento, the Big Little Fanzine. Thank you to everyone who encouraged us by asking when the next one would be out.

Distribution on #3 wasn't as extensive as we intended—we played the Fanzine Fairy at Janecon and Chicon V but never followed up with mailed copies for people we didn't see there. So if we missed you on #3 and you want a copy, it wasn't personal. Just let us know. (It's the one with the fanzine-on-rye on the cover.)

Bento #4 is a Bento Press production from

Kate Yule and David Levine  
117 NW Trinity Place #37  
Portland, OR 97209  
(503) 224-6427

It is available for The Usual (LoC's, tradezines, or \$1–2 cash).

### Art Credits

- p. 4, 10, 11–12: David Levine
- p. 14: Teddy Harvia
- p. 19, 30: Steve Berry
- p. 22: Kate Yule

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### Apple Sets Bento Standard

On the day we got married, 5/18/92, the following appeared on page 100 of *MacWEEK* Magazine:

In other news, Apple said that Bento, a cross-platform standard for documents containing multiple data types will be released simultaneously on the Mac and Windows; reference code on how to read Bento documents will be free to users. Eventually, the standard will be released to an independent industry alliance, Apple said. □

*Bento* readers will surely be relieved to know that our little fanzine is both Mac- and Windows-compatible, and that information on how to read it will be free to users. —DDL

### I Ask No Quarter and Give None

*No. 1 in a series of "Great Vending Machines We Have Known"*

We used to have one of those old-fashioned pop machines where I work, one of the ones that dispensed soda by the cup rather than by the can. As is typical for pop machines of this vintage, it would sometimes behave in a non-deterministic manner. You'd sometimes get seltzer and ice (with no syrup), which isn't bad

unless what you really wanted was a Coke. Occasionally you would watch the components of your soda being efficiently poured straight down the drain, followed by a dry and pristine cup. Or, even worse, the cup would arrive on-time but upside-down, precipitating a hailstorm of ice followed by a downpour of seltzer on your shoes.

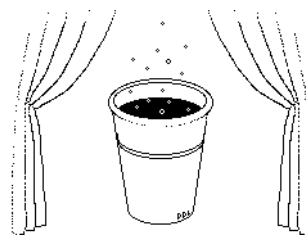
All of this is to be expected from 1940's pop-machine technology. But one thing about it had me baffled. There was this little door in front of the place the cup was supposed to come down. When you put in your money, the door slid open, the cup and soda came down, and then *the door slid closed*, leaving you to push it back open to get your drink. Why did it close?? Finally I realized that *the purpose of the machine was not to dispense soda pop*. This machine was a point at the intersection of sculpture, theatre, and commerce: *coin-operated performance art!*

All became clear. The little door was not merely a spring-loaded hindrance to obtaining liquid refreshment. Instead, it was the curtain across the tiny proscenium that divided Artist from Audience. When you deposited your coin, you initiated a performance: the curtain opened, the players performed, the curtain closed. And, if you were lucky, you could join the players for a drink after the show.

And if you were not so lucky? Well, the truly Artistic thing about this piece, the part that would make Sen. Helms froth like

Dr. Pepper if he knew, was the *danger* inherent in the work. Here was an artwork that forced itself upon the audience—which might spit sticky liquid on your shoes or drench you with seltzer without warning—and made the viewer not merely participate, but *pay* to participate! Here was a metaphor for the Industrial Age. Here Man met Machine upon a level playing field, and to the victor belong the spoils!

I applauded the audacity of my employer, to place such a bold and incisive artwork in our humble lunchroom. The other employees, however, could not see beyond the surface. They claimed they did not like to have soda sprayed upon their shoes. In fact, they could not bear the machine's implicit criticism of their own too-ordered lives. And so the machine was removed, to be replaced by a piece of Neo-Pop art: a machine in the form of a giant, glowing can of Pepsi. This machine dispenses cans, not cups. It is compartmentalized, ordered, predictable. It's bourgeois. And I don't even *like* Pepsi! —DDL



## Bid Stickers & Gizmos

*or, Fandom is a Universal Way of Life*

Membership is dwindling. A convention is always a reliable fund-raiser, and one is planned, with a big-name guest, but there's no seed money in the treasury to run it! Just mailing a regular newsletter (if we did) takes the full annual dues. A faction splits off, claiming we don't give them enough programming time. The membership thinks it elected the officers to do everything, and the officers don't know how to delegate back out to the members, so they burn out and gafiate.

Fandom? Hell no, I'm talking about our local gay square dance club.

Back in issue #2 I wrote about the similarities between learning to square dance and learning a foreign language. I had just graduated from class. Two years later, SMOFdom beckons. I spent a lot of time at this winter's new class, helping out, learning the boy's part (we call it "being bi-dansual"), and mostly sitting and talking with the then-president about how things were going. He liked what an understanding audience I was. Heck, I'd lived through it all with PorSFis! I was bemused to see the parallels.

Some parallels were obvious early on. I asked someone one night what the embroidered flamingo on his club badge was for. He started explaining about the annual convention, and how it was

in Miami in '89, and... I interrupted. He's in SF fandom too. "It's a bid sticker, that's what you're telling me?" "It's a bid sticker."

Other badge adornments include hanging bars to proclaim offices held, like President or Sex Kitten, stickers to show what level (or gender) you dance, and doohickeys given out at special events. It's as if all of your convention badges and committee ribbons for the past 10 years were concatenated onto one permanent plastic name tag. Some, especially straight clubs I think, go for it to a degree that would make Tim Illingworth keel over from the weight.

I can't really say what straight clubs are like. Haven't gotten up the nerve to visit any—yet. The prospect is as terrifying as my first weeks at this club's classes...or my first SF con. I didn't know a soul there, circled the hotel twice before I got up the nerve to go in and register.

Once inside, though, I rapidly made some deductions about this new society I found myself in. Read a few Westercon bid posters. "Hmm, elevators are obviously very important in this culture." Looked at the program. "Apparently authors don't need to eat." Learned more than I wanted to from Harlan's infamous "Xenogenesis" GoH speech!

And I can make some guesses about straight square dance culture, after studying the program book for the upcoming Oregon state festival. When I see that 26 out of 39 committee positions are

held by married couples; that there are special after-hours parties for singles and “youth” at such local hotbeds of excitement as Pizza Hut; and so many RV’s coming that they are using a trucking company parking lot across the river, I can deduce that the demographics slant heavily towards married retirees. In garb. (There are *lots* of ads for petticoat shops.)

All in all I think I joined the right group, even if mainstream dancing looks upon us as fondly as faanish fans regard Klingons!

Last summer, at a square dance weekend in Seattle, I stood gazing at the water of Puget Sound from the rail of a chartered ship full of dancing queers, and reflected that I was happy. Pure, to-the-bone happy. Happier than I remembered being since that first glorious ‘84 Westercon. And it scared me a little. Does everything lose its flavor on the bedpost eventually? Will I gafiate from fandom and square dancing the way I gafiated from theater and other previous sources of great joy?

But it didn’t really worry me. The corollary was obvious. Even if I do, there will be some new fandom to catch my interest. We are not the only people this crazy, though we pride ourselves on thinking so. There is beer fandom, 3D photography fandom, pet breeding, Civil War re-enactments. You name it, they hold conventions for it. And give badges. With ribbons. I’ll feel right at home.

Next installment: Some thoughts on role reversal, or “What’s a Straight Girl Like You Doing in a Club Like This.” —KY

## Good and Bad Advice

I’ve gotten a lot of good advice from packages in my time. For example, just the other day I read a bottle of antihistamines that told me to

### EXERCISE CARE WHEN DRIVING OR OPERATING HEAVY MACHINERY

which certainly sounds reasonable. Another bottle in my medicine cabinet advises me to

### AVOID TEMPERATURES OVER 100° FAHRENHEIT

which I generally strive to do anyway, but it can’t hurt to be reminded of these things once in a while.

And, of course, it’s certainly a good idea to

### KEEP AWAY FROM FIRE OR FLAME

But what am I to make of such admonishments as

### KEEP AWAY FROM CHILDREN

and

### DO NOT EAT

?

—DDL

## To Stop the Train

*Being another in a continuing series of “rounds learned from Amy Thomson while on a dinner expedition”*

Amy says one of her fondest desires is to someday teach this song to a group of Japanese tourists. “Imagine them, so serious, doing all the gestures *just right*...” Instead she has had to settle for a dozen dazed fen on the last night of a Worldcon, on a platform of the Chicago El. We didn’t get the gestures just right, and we were not at all serious.

As for origins, Amy says she learned it from Jon Singer at Minicon, and I think Jon said he learned it from Amy, so go figure. All in all, this fits with the Prairie Home Companion definition of a folk song, namely “one you have heard from someone else, and to which you remember the words mostly”.

OK—we’ll start, and you come in on the second line. Ready?

### The Words

To stop the train  
In cases of emergency  
Pull down the chai-in  
Pull down the chai-in  
Penalty for improper use, five pounds

### The Music

1. To stop the train in cases of e  
mer-gen-cy-y pull down the chai-  
pen-al-ty toi i-im-prop-e use five pounds

2.

## The Gestures



A.  
To stop



B.  
the train



C.  
in cases



D.  
of emergency



E.  
pull down  
the chain



F.  
pull down  
the chain



G.  
penalty for  
improper use



H.  
five



I.  
pounds

## Use Exact Change When Lit

*No. 2 in a series of "Great Vending Machines We Have Known"*

If you're ever in Portland, you must be certain to visit the 24-Hour Coin-Operated Church of Elvis. No, I am not making this up. The Church of Elvis is just part of "Where's the ART!," the Gallery of Art for the Smart, the World's First 24-Hour Coin-Operated Art Gallery, located at 219 SW Ankeny. Their motto: "24 hours 25 cents—that is our guarantee to you the art consumer."

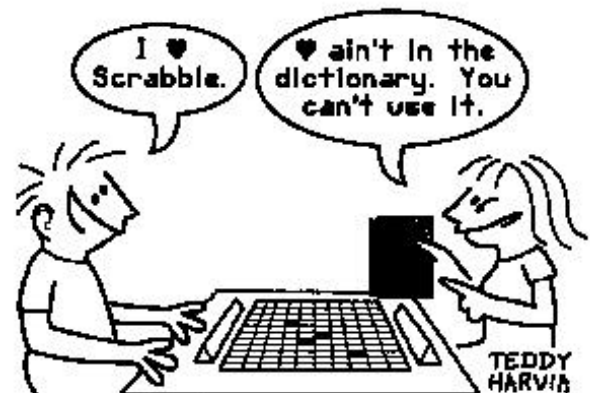
"Where's the ART!" is a rather unprepossessing storefront in a little tiny street, almost an alley, about two blocks from Port-

land's Saturday Market (permanent weekend arts-and-crafts fair, also worth your time). It consists of two store windows and a door, painted blue and white, with the most incredible collection of *stuff* glued to it. Rhinestones, Kewpie dolls, telephone handsets, you name it. Still more impressive is what's inside the two windows (well, what *was* inside—more on this later): a variety of coin-operated artworks that consist of still more *stuff*, hot-glued together into bizarre three-dimensional collages of pop culture. Each includes a computer screen and voice synthesizer, and many moving parts, and is entirely under the control of You the Art Consumer.

Yes, it's interactive. For example, when you deposit a quarter in the Church of Elvis, you are presented with a menu of options: Confession, Wedding, etc. If you can't read the menu because the sun is shining in the window, you can block it off with a large piece of foam, labeled OFFICIAL WHERE'S THE ART!! SUNSHADE, which is provided for just such an emergency. The menu is also read aloud for you, by a voice that sounds like the kind of voice a blender would have on the morning after making too many margaritas. You make your selections by pressing one of several rhinestone-encrusted buttons hot-glued to the window sill (the menu of sins you might like to confess to is a hoot).

The official Church of Elvis Religious Experience includes a variety of cheap computer graphics, odd sound effects, rotating

rhinestone-encrusted icons of Elvis, and finally: a prize! Yes, for your quarter you get not only an Interactive Art Experience, but an actual piece of *stuff* to take home for your very own. It might be a badge that says "HELLO! My name was: Nefertiti" or \$200 in official Elvis Money or who knows what. There's no telling what you might get, but it is dispensed to a slot on the front of the building for you at the close of the performance and it's all "semi-Art-O-Matic." And if some random trinket isn't sufficient souvenir of your pilgrimage, just knock on the door and you may be able to buy an official Church of Elvis T-shirt from The Artist Herself.



The perpetrator of all this is a slight, dark-haired, rhinestone-encrusted woman by the name of Stephanie Pierce. In addition to “Where’s the ART!”, she also has a semi-regular local cable access TV show that’s just about as weird as you’d imagine. Unfortunately, she’s run into some hard times lately. The great State of Oregon, insisting that she pay back \$6000 in student loans, wanted to garnishee her wages. But the proprietor of “Where’s the ART!” didn’t have any wages that they could garnishee (unless they wanted to break into the coinbox, which in addition to being un-governmental would probably leave them with more rhinestone cuts than you could patch up with a whole box of Band-Aids), so they confiscated the contents of her checking account instead.

To pay her rent she had to auction off most of her window displays. Adieu, Dr. Justin D. Nikov-Time! Farewell, World’s Cheapest Psychic and Past Life Analysis! Sayonara to a hundred rhinestone-encrusted bowling trophies! Where, indeed, is the ART!! today? Only the Church of Elvis itself remains.

Despite this setback, Stephanie Pierce’s devotion to ART!! is unswayed. In the space vacated by her other window displays, she has installed *herself*, in a project she calls “Biosphere \$6000.” She plans to live in her window until... well, I don’t know until what. Stop by and offer her some moral and/or financial support anyway, and offer up a few prayers at the Shrine of the King while you’re there. Quarters only.

—DDL

## My Wasted Youth

by Ariel Shattan

As I look back on my life from the vast height of my 34 years, I regret the way I wasted my youth. When I think about how I could have spent my time drinking, using drugs, and having uninhibited sex, how I could have been irresponsible and lazy. I could just cry. Now, of course, I’m too old. My body won’t handle the alcohol and drugs; I’m married, and also would rather not catch an incurable sexually transmitted disease; and I have my career to consider should I ever get the urge to disappear for a month into the Arizona desert.

From today’s vantage point, I know why I was the good child I was. I was afraid. I was afraid of Authority, and what it would do to me if I stepped out of line. I was afraid of other people, and didn’t want to be around them unless I had all my faculties gathered protectively around me, and, barring that, an escape route. And I was afraid of my own wild emotions, and felt that I needed to keep them severely in check, or they would erupt in a blinding flash that would crisp everything in a 10-mile radius.

Oh, to be young again, knowing what I know now, with the strength and confidence that comes only with time. If I could take my 34-year-old brain and return it to my 19-year-old body...

Sex instead of studying! All-night parties instead of all-night reading! Motorcycles instead of mathematics! I’d sleep with every guy who caught my fancy, and on my terms only. If he didn’t satisfy me, I’d drop him like a rock. I’d drink beer and smoke dope and take hallucinogens until I couldn’t see straight. Then I’d sober up and do it again. I’d hang out with biker mechanics and build my own Harley from parts, then ride it at 80 mph until I reached the tallest peak in the Rockies. Damn the consequences! Full speed ahead!

YEE-HAH!

\*ooof\*

Y’know, it tires me out just thinking about it. So I guess I’ll go get my book and read in bed for a few minutes before I turn off the light and get my eight-and-a-half hours of sleep.

I know it’s never too late to have a happy childhood, but I’m afraid that, for me, anyway, it’s way too late to have a wild youth.

## Marine Polis Rotating Sushi Land

*No. 3 in a series of “Great Vending Machines We Have Known”*

I’ve heard you can get almost anything from a vending machine in Japan. Beer. Software. Seaweed. People can even pay by electronic card to insert *themselves* into small cubbyholes for the night, a strange inversion of the usual process of retrieving a candy bar from slot G7.

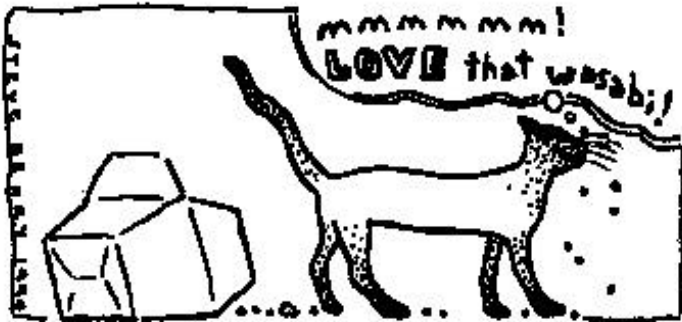
And then there’s Marine Polis Rotating Sushi Land. There are 70 branches of this establishment. 69 of them are in Japan. One is in suburban Portland.

We went there during its first week. It was obvious to me that they had imported the entire staff from Japan, if only to start. The waitresses had the same quivering politeness as the overdrilled young staff in the Chinese comedy *Chicken and Duck Talk*. On posters, cute cartoon sea creatures from the same stylistic universe as Hello Kitty praised the nutritional merits of vinegar, rice, fish, and seaweed. The row of turquoise malt-shop stools that circle the counter turned out to be movable, like chairs. Everything about the place had the tested, practical, mass-produced look of a system that had worked 69 times before, and all of it subtly Not Quite the Way We Do it Round Here. You could not mistake this place for a White Castle.

Once the waitress has shown you to a stool and offered beverages, you’re on your own, for at MPRSL the menu is 3-D and interactive. The food parades past you on a never-ending plastic conveyor belt. Small plastic plates with 2-3 pieces of sushi are interspersed with small bowls of pickled ginger (first bowl free) and carts bearing the totem animal of the place, a cheerful plastic ~~walrus fish whale~~ marine creature of some kind. He carries placards telling you that plates “this color” are variously \$1.00, \$1.50,

or \$2.00. The waitress will tally up your dishes when you're done. Reach out, try something, it's only an orange plate!

The preparers, all male and chattering away wildly in Japanese (no artistic concentration here) stand in the center, mass-producing tekka rolls, scooping wasabi from recycled 5-gallon miso tubs. The sight of so much wasabi in one place is enough to clear your sinuses. This is good, it can be hard to get their attention to ask for more. The prices are more in line with dim sum than with sushi. As with dim sum, you take your chances on what will come around while you are there. (Ooh, was that salmon? Hey, grab me one, willya?) One end of the loop disappears into a back room. We assume someone there pulls the unwanted, no-longer fresh sushi based on what varieties are made at what time. They've got to have some system—don't they?



Donald G. Wileman

Lindsay, Ontario

“First Friday after Epiphany, 1992”

“Gone to slay mastodon”... Do you two spotted or herbacious people really live in such a craftful and pleasant way, or is much of the art added in the re-telling, as with the Bipt? (*Bipt being a member of an APA that David and Donald G. have in common.*) We do consciously try to “give good story,” but yes, really, it did all happen just like that. For example, on the opposite page is an actual note found by David on arrival home one night.

Gram and I never play Scrabble without both a Brit-English dictionary (usually Cassel's) and the Webster's Collegiate. Damn little we can't get away with between the two of them. Even so, I think I might fare better with you two. Gram has been doing cross-words longer than most of us have been alive, and we hew fairly rigourously to the rules. This means that she usually wins, while I waste half my playing time arranging my tiles into German nouns and the names of obscure villages in Khirghizia...

He goes on to talk about accent marks, including the French circumflex—which has now officially been abolished, did you know? A pity, since it was the only accent I actually liked. Still, to protest it would put me in the same club as the Giscardian Youth for the Circumflex—a real entity but (one suspects) one of those which holds its Annual Meetings in 'phone booths... All of which

It's not great sushi. Sometimes it's barely good. I refuse to even *try* anything with canned corn on it! As with David's soda machine, sustenance is only part of the reason for going there. Rotating Sushi Land combines a dime-store luncheonette's cheapness, use of basic foods, and penchant for mayonnaise, with the mesmerizing trance state usually brought on by watching penguins swim underwater at the Aquarium. If you come to Portland, we'd be glad to take you there. —KY

## LoC's and Bagels

Mark Manning

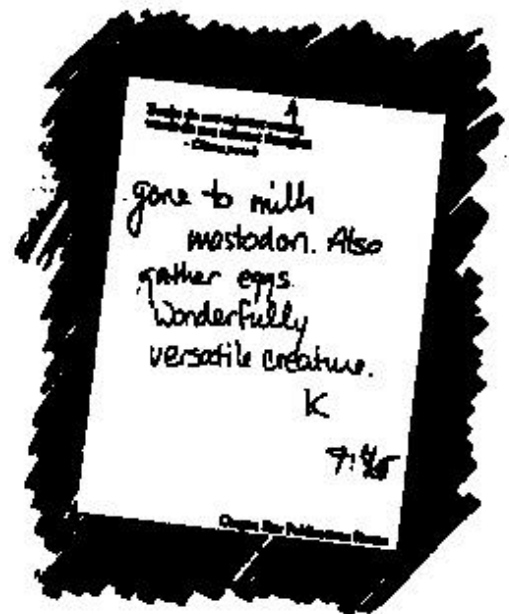
Seattle, Washington

March 17, 1991

Much good material in this, including (but not limited to) the interesting information that Volkswagen Beetles require thingies for certain important orifices, the arrival of bagels in Portland, the fact that neither of you can spell “Gandhi”.

Laurie Mann's thoughts on Chinese cuisine are interesting enough... Getsu-shin and I hold, however, that Laurie cannot really be said to have achieved Enlightenment until she becomes even as one with bitter melon.

Mark also included a whole bunch of fish puns, which we will not print here because fish puns are (a) too easy, and (b) too addictive. Not to carp...



leaves me with that Bohemian accent which looks like an upside-down circumflex and whose name is pronounced “hat check”...

Enjoyed Laurie Mann's piece, just found no comment hooks. Recall, though a similar revelation when I went to lunch with a

bunch of fans and discovered that Chinese food, far from consisting of Cantonese, barely begun there. Still can't get cold noodles in sesame sauce anyplace closer than the US Eastern seaboard. Tend to live on them when I'm there... *Actually, cold sesame noodles are fairly easy to breed in captivity. We'll send you a recipe.*

Was surprised as hell that you printed all my letter. The critical bits were meant to be eyes-only. Will be both prudent and truthful and say I enjoyed everything this time—unmitigatedly.

*I strongly doubt we printed ALL your letter, Don...But yes, my editorial philosophy is that it smacks of unfairness if we go through and print nothing but the fawningly agreeable bits of what we receive. Reasonable criticism should be included in something approaching an equitable proportion to its receipt. It is a way of letting people know we listen to it; and a way of demonstrating to others who need such a role model what REASONABLE criticism looks like. Please do not let it scare you away from honesty should we, in some distant future issue, again give the appearance of having erred.*

My nephew Mr. Hi was away for almost all of the week between Christmas and New Year! Which meant that I didn't get wakened every morning at hourly intervals starting at 6:30 or so.

*I like the image.*

no Indian, no Ethiopian, not even Chinese!! Faugh! We all concluded: worthless people, find new friends.

*After being introduced to Indian food on our '87 Brighton Worldcon trip, we are now gurus ourselves, initiating other people into the wonders of vindaloo and papadums. We started a whole thread of Indonesian dining at the Portland Smofcon last year. It's fun to share these things.*

*Lynne Ann, and others, assured us that linguistic silliness at bedtime is not unusual, in this audience anyway.*

### Luke McGuff

Seattle, Washington

3/12/91

Thanks for the latest copy of *Bento*. Yeah! I enjoyed reading it last night, quoting quips from it to Jane as we ate dinner. Hah!

So whose wedding are you planning on? Yours? Hah! Good luck. Married life has treated me okay so far, but I can't say that I'm an old hand at it. This is my first one. Okay! We'll have to see how it goes.

I hope you had a good time at Janecon, we sure did, I think a lot of people did. It was a cooperative party. Everybody is real experienced at going to cons, and the people who worked on it are pretty experienced (for the most part) at throwing cons. In fact, a couple times we realized that gee, maybe we should have taken care of something a couple weeks before the convention, rather

### Lynne Ann Morse

The Hague, Netherlands

23 October 1991

“Highway Scene with Owl and Firemen” didn't seem very focused to me—too many intriguing goodies you could have split off as haiku, or short-shorts on the weirdness of the world. It seemed mostly a VW Beetle story (I read it mostly as that, having mine own soft spot for the Beetle) and the pinball motive merely a distracting frame.

“The Coming of the Rye” has focus, and charm. You'd tipped us off about the mysteriously appearing & disappearing Chinese restaurant, but the story was still fun to read, with the added pleasure of remembering the knick-knack-filled Japanese place where we first heard you tell the story. (See! I remember through the saki and everything!) The bagel story was WONderful. When I was in New York & nearly sick from too much smoke in a dance club, Vijay Bowen hit upon the right cure for an unsettled tummy at 3:00 Sunday morning...a fresh bagel from a nearby bakery. I began to understand the Easterners' bagel chauvinism.

“Lusting after the General” was fun as a guest piece. The sister and roommate of Hope Kiefer once complained that a group of people didn't want to go out for any “fun food” at all. The litany of rejected cuisines was recited to mounting incredulity—no Mexican,

than Friday or Saturday. But it was because of the relative amount of experience that people were able to recover the ball so quickly. Janecon sure changed my life. Hah!

*Note to the reader: Luke and Jane Hawkins surprised everyone by getting married at opening ceremonies at Jane's birthday con, at which Bento #3 was distributed. We got married two months later, in much more conventional circumstances. And Luke talks just like he writes. Yeah!*

Jane's also had the experience of having a movie made down the block, at an old high school no longer used by the city. At first it was covered with graffiti, then there was a barbed wire fence and a guard tower... Jane began to wonder what was happening to her neighborhood. Finally she saw that somebody was making a movie, “The Class of 1999” I think. She's repeatedly expressed the wish to see the movie, because at the end they blow up a schoolbus apparently. I think this particular movie didn't even go “straight to video,” but is sitting somewhere in a can. Hah!

Anyway, I don't think this loc does much justice to *Bento*. For some reason, I really enjoyed it. I don't know why. But there you go. I liked the “Ceci n'est pas un thingie” joke. Yeah! “Ceci n'est pas un life.”

Okay, I'll run away here and finish unpacking. We're trying to give away all the leftovers. Yeah! Hope you enjoy the fortune cookies. Are you really going to eat them all or do you have some

secret nefarious plan? Hahahahahahah! *Kate bought about three cubic feet of leftover Janecon fortune cookies, complete with custom fannish fortunes, at the Janecon TAFF/DUFF auction. We wound up using them as munchies at our own wedding, and they went over great, although one of David's relatives wondered why her fortune was "Gardner Dozois will make you a star."*

Peter Larsen

Minneapolis, Minnesota

4/9/92

It was very, very nice. Much better than *Cats*, if the truth be told. Especially fine were "Highway Scene" and "Scrabble". There was some sense of the lunacy that is usually waiting in the corners of my own life. I have this illusion of normality, which is constantly challenged—rolling around on the sidewalk with a dim-witted shoplifter with a nail in his ear and Wallace Budge's *Gods of Ancient Egypt* under his coat and a backpack full of stolen Alistair Crowley books, for example. What can you say, but "life is like that?" You catch the exasperation and whimsey to a T.

I also like the size and look of *Bento*. It avoids being a fanzine while remaining completely a fanzine, if you know what I mean. Even from one issue, I get the feeling that it is thoroughly *it*. I'd like to see more, although I suppose if I maintain my pattern of 6 months' delay in LoCs, I won't, eh? *Peter, at our current rate, if*

Cathy Doyle

Newport News, Virginia

April 5, 1992

A friend was over the other day, to look through the year's worth of zines waiting to be loxed to get addresses to send art to (isn't that an encouraging thought?) He came to *Bento* and said, "This is just the cutest thing," and took your names and addresses down right away.

After all this time, and with a new VCR which offers on-screen programming, Kip still messes up recording something every once in a while. It drives him up a wall. We now have over 400 video tapes (and yes, they are taking over the apartment, along with our collection of paper), and Kip's devised a nifty computer program to keep track of everything, including a large collection of cartoons. Of course, he didn't bother to do any data entry for over a year, until we recently got a new computer.

*Computers are a great way to organize all your data. If only you could get a computer to type all that data into the computer in the first place!*

Teddy Harvia

Eules, Texas

6 September 1991

I enjoyed meeting you at Chicon. At the convention I felt a little like the ambulance you mentioned. I was constantly whooping

*you LoC every 6 months we'll get 2.3 LoCs from you per issue... don't worry too much.*

I've been described as a modest "weirdness magnet". I find myself surrounded, not too often, but enough, by events that are sudden, whimsical, and rather extraordinary. I've been worshipped by a deranged economist, greeted noncommittally by a fierce dog in the neighborhood as it runs loose (woof! it says, trotting past. "Oh, hi", I respond—it's like that guy at work who you nod to every day but never really know) on a regular basis, and deranged strangers are driven to come talk to me. To my benefit usually. And I wonder—are there people to which this never happens? Whose lives are completely explicable? Who don't notice when this sort of thing happens to them? Obviously you can cultivate it, but can you get rid of it? Inquiring minds want to know.

I think all of these are factors: magnetism/attracting weirdness, recognizing it when it happens, and being able to present events to others in such a way as to highlight their inherent weirdness.

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*"How come we walk around in the buff, but go off in a snit?"*

*"You've only got one buff. Snits regenerate."*

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when my path intersected with that of my friends. Years between visits and windows of opportunity numbered in days will do that to you. I'll send you some cartoons if you want to supplement your clipart as soon as I clear my brain of its residual WorldCon alcohol and visions of young bodies in Spandex.

Beast wishes, Teddy Harvia

*Teddy apparently recovered; see page 14.*

